the weekly Standard

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ALL PROCESS NO PEACE
ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THE ROOTS OF OBAMA WORSHIP

Auguste Comte's 'Religion of Humanity' finds a 21st-century savior

BY JAMES W. CEASER

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Eine Kleine Barack Musik

January 17 promises to be a landmark occasion in the long, proud history of German cabaret musicals examining the role of African-American politicians and their wives in U.S. presidential elections, so you can imagine our frustration that deadlines prevent us from seeing *Hope!—the Obama Musical Story* before writing this brief notice. The show premieres in a concert hall in far-off Frankfurt, but the website (www.hope-musical.com) gives the curious a good, stiff taste of what that magical evening will entail.

Randall Hitchins, the composer of *Hope*, says he "had the idea [for the musical] during the presidential campaign," making it one of the few genuine ideas to be associated with Obama's run for the presidency, and the only one to have borne fruit. Hitchins began by composing a single song. It was called, as if you couldn't guess, "Yes, We Can." He found himself so swept up in emotion and joy that he decided to give it the full Rodgers and Hammerstein.

He set his show in a boarding house in Chicago. As the website explains, "Seeing through the eyes of the inhabitants in an apartment-sharing community, we experience the American society which is distressed by the prevailing economical-political chaos, lost in social helplessness—disoriented."

'Michelle' und 'Barack'

Disoriented seems to be the right word. Among the "dazzling characters" are "the Puerto Rican Ricardo"—Germans think all Puerto Ricans are named Ricardo—"who has had enough of politics." (We know the feeling.) Also there's "the ultra-conservative widow Mrs. Shultz of German origin"—ultra-conservative German must be a euphemism for something—and a political activist named Elaine, and John McCain and Sarah Palin, and Hillary Clinton, who, from what we can see on the website video, belts out a Liza Minelli showstopper called "I Will be Ready on Day One." Then Mr. and Mrs. Obama arrive to heave Dreamgirls-style love songs at one another until they finally "succeed in enthusing and thrilling all people from different cultures, religions, or skin colors." (Make ours magenta!)

With little drums attached to each seat in the theater, the show is meant to be interactive, relying on heavy audience participation. This is what the Obama administration was supposed to do, too, before its audience turned against it. The musical-lovers in Germany—birthplace of *Sturm und Drang*, after all, and much else—will be more kindly disposed. It's good to know that there's one spot in the world where the dream has yet to die. ♦

Collins's Rant

The Scrapbook has a confession to make. When pondering certain principles of democratic governance, we do not ordinarily turn to the writings of Gail Collins for guidance. Collins, who was briefly editorial page editor of the *New York Times* and now writes a column for the *Times*'s op-ed page, is sadly symbolic of the general quality of her surroundings, fodder for comic relief more than political insight. Not for nothing has she been described as "Maureen Dowd Lite."

Gail Collins

But one of her eruptions last week did remind us of a fundamental notion of our system of checks and balances. Distressed at the thought that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts might fail to return a Democrat to the Senate, and that the rush to Obamacare might therefore be slowed down, she complained that "all it takes to stop legislation is one guy plus 40 senators representing 10.2 percent of the country."

Got that—all you good-for-nothing, underpopulated states? "Think about what we went through to elect a new president," writes Collins. "A year and a half of campaigning, three dozen debates, $1.6 billion in donations. Then the voters sent a clear, unmistakable message. Which can be totally ignored because of a parliamentary rule that allows the representatives of slightly more than 10 percent of the population to call the shots."

Collins exaggerates, of course. Yet in her self-described "rant" she not only reveals the authoritarian impulse that is never far below the surface on the left, but a fundamental pitfall of representative democracy that has concerned observers as diverse as James Madison, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Lani Guinier: the tyranny of the majority. Writing to Thomas Jefferson during the Constitutional Convention, Madison asked a pertinent question: When "a majority, united by a common interest or a passion cannot be constrained from oppressing the minority, what remedy can be found?"

In The Scrapbook's considered opinion, you cannot do much better than Gail Collins's churlish complaint to illustrate the tyranny of the majority. We went to a lot of trouble

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to elect Barack Obama, she says; on Election Day we sent you guys a clear, unambiguous message. And now you representatives of smaller states and minority parties dare to stand in our way and demand public debate and accountability?

To be sure, The Scrapbook does not expect Collins to comprehend these finer points of political theory, or recognize how her triumphalist tone must sound to American ears. But she underlines, in her artless way, the genius of the American system—of limited government, checks and balances, divided power, and consent of the governed. The system doesn't always work the way it's supposed to, of course; but it's a system that, at its best, acknowledges we are a country composed of 50 very different states, self-governing in a spirit of forbearance and compromise. Or as Madison expressed his hope to Jefferson: With enough "different interests and parties . . . no common interest or passion will be likely to unite a majority of the whole number in an unjust pursuit." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'While Rove conveniently ignores that it was President Bush—not Obama—who signed into law the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program bailout for banks, the Obama administration's rigorous stewardship added transparency and . . ." ("What Karl Rove Got Wrong on the U.S. Deficit," by David Axelrod, *Washington Post*, January 15). ♦

The Devil and Haiti

Televangelist Pat Robertson has a theory to explain the destruction in Haiti. Two hundred years ago, "They were under the heel of the French," he explained last week, "and they got together and swore a pact to the devil. They said, 'We will serve you if you'll get us free from the French.'"

"True story," Robertson added (for some reason). "And the devil said, 'OK, it's a deal.' . . . Ever since, they have been cursed by one thing after another."

The Scrapbook brings this up not to pile on Robertson, who has been justly and roundly condemned for his jejune theological speculations. Rather, we want to note that his is not the only devil-theory floating around.

Danny Glover, the left-wing actor, and henceforth The Scrapbook's go-to expert on natural disasters, explained that "What happened in Haiti could happen to anywhere in the Caribbean because all these island nations are in peril because of global warming. . . . When we did what we did at the climate summit in Copenhagen, this is the response, this is what happens, you know what I'm saying? We have to act now." Next time, listen to Al Gore!

Oh, and then there's that favorite devil of the American left, George W. Bush, who while presumably not responsible for the plate tectonics under Haiti, must be blameworthy for *something*. Sure enough, *Mother Jones* weighed in with the goods on "How Bush-Cheney Policy Screwed Haiti":

> In the aftermath of September 11 and the Bush administration's numerous adventures around the world, Haiti returned to its usual state of invisibility in Western eyes. Few people noticed a remarkable report that appeared in the *New York Times* in 2006, based in part on the analysis of former ambassador Brian Dean Curran, showing how US policy helped to destabilize Haiti in the years leading up to 2004. . . . For the most part, Europe and the United States have continued to sit by as Haiti has grown poorer and poorer. . . . It is hard to imagine what a magnitude 7

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earthquake might do to a city that on any ordinary day already resembles a disaster area.

Like the devil's, the Bush curse just keeps on keeping on. ♦

Whatever Happened to Equality?

One of the great buzzwords of the Obamacare P.R. campaign used to be "equality." Here's a random press release from last March:

> More than 20 major labor, community, health, civil rights, social justice, and faith organizations gathered in Washington today to kick off a major coalition campaign, the Healthcare Equality Project, to fight healthcare disparities. . . . The Healthcare Equality Project is fighting for healthcare that works for EVERYONE.

Oh, right. The latest behind-closed-doors Obamacare deal will make a few exceptions to the Senate's 40 percent tax on so-called Cadillac health care plans. The *Washington Post* reports: "Plans with significant numbers of women or older workers would receive an additional break, as would workers in high-cost states and high-risk professions. . . . [Union] workers with collective-bargaining agreements and government employers would be exempt until 2018."

Turns out, some people are more equal than others. ♦

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The Ties That Bind

I am not a free man. I have kids, a wife, a job. I am, as they say, tied down. This means that no matter where I go, I remain tethered by invisible strings of love and obligation to people who depend on me—and on whom I depend.

But for a couple of hours a day I slip the knots. I do so by simply leaving my house or my office and taking with me no communications devices—because I don't own any.

That's right, I don't own a cell phone. Go ahead, laugh. There's something funny about it, like a character in a Jules Feiffer play who admits, with an embarrassed catch in his voice, "I've never been to Europe."

The decision to do without was easy for me. I was not a phone person to begin with, and the little spare money I had when cell phones first became popular I preferred to spend on beer. Also this: In my life people never said things like, "Can you believe what just happened? We've got to talk to Dave, stat!"

These days I find beer more affordable, though I still tend to be frugal. And the number of people who might ever call me with an urgent matter has ticked up slightly, from zero to maybe two. Yet I continue resisting the siren call of monthly charges and personalized ring tones.

When pressed, I can always borrow a cell phone of my wife's—for some reason, she has several. A couple of years ago I was planning a short business trip with a new colleague, who looked dumbfounded when I told him I didn't have a cell phone. "Can you borrow one?" he asked. "Sure," I said. Waiting for me at the airport, he called to ask where I was. "I'm right over here," I said, my voice carrying naturally to his ears because I had already seen him and was only 20 feet away.

Another reason I've resisted is that I treasure my Alone Time. Bicycling to and from work, I fear no interruption as I coast along and let my mind do what comes naturally, which is remarkably little, unless it's morning and I've had a cup of coffee, in which case I make up long strings of puns. If I've had two cups of coffee, my mind gives stage to elaborate plays of ambition in which my disparate literary endeavors become unified in a brilliant fictional rendering of political-sociological-philosophical truth spanning multiple generations and centuries of history—in verse. See, it's not a good time to call.

CHRIS GASH

I might have questioned my policy on cell phones recently, as I stood outside the Daughters of the American Revolution in downtown Washington. Instead I was thinking about the DAR's street address: 1776 D Street, NW. How did they finagle such an excellent number, I wondered?

I was having more Alone Time than I wanted, waiting for someone named Jen and her husband. Jen works with my wife, Cynthia, and that afternoon she had sent out a Facebook message saying she had extra tickets to see The Pixies at Constitution Hall. Cynthia knew I'd love to see The Pixies and so volunteered to watch our kids while I went out on what she called a "blind friend date" with Jen and Mr. Jen.

Cynthia had spoken to Jen about the arrangements. The rendezvous was set for 8:45 P.M. at 1776 D Street. The Pixies were going on stage at 9:00.

The time was 8:50 and then 8:55. I was standing by the DAR's side entrance, the address clearly marked, half a block down from the bustling entrance to the concert hall, and there was no sign of Jen. But, I thought, she has kids, and I know how hard it can be to get out of the house. At nine o'clock, I began chewing my fingernails. The Pixies were performing their album *Doolittle*, which has 15 songs on it, most less than three minutes long, some under two. At that very moment I was probably missing their opening track, "Debaser." Soon I'd be missing one of my favorite songs of all time, track number five, "Here Comes Your Man."

At 9:25, I decided to check Will Call before, in all likelihood, going home. To my surprise, my ticket was there. Ushered in the dark to a seat, I watched the rest of the show. But I never did find Jen and her husband.

When I got home, Cyn asked if I'd actually seen any of the concert. After a while, more words were spoken, but they were of that dreaded species of marital utterance whose phrases seem braided with sighs, and both parties feel they know the other a little too well. I gathered that Jen had called Cynthia when she didn't find me in front of the theater. And Cyn felt responsible that her friend had been standing around waiting for me. She was also upset that I had missed part of the concert. I tried to understand her frustration, but then the conversation took an ominous turn. "Please," she said, "tell me again why you don't have a cell phone?"

David Skinner

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (1)

Do the media feed us fiction instead of fact?

We all know that, by dint of constant repetition, white can be made to appear black, good can get transformed into evil, and myth may take the place of reality. Israel, with roughly one-thousandth of the world's population and with a similar fraction of the territory of this planet, seems to engage a totally disproportionate attention of the print and broadcast media of the world. Unfortunately, much of what the media tell us — in reporting, editorializing in columns, and in analysis — are endlessly repeated myths.

What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 200,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? About 1.2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one, never before thought of in world history. Israel has emerged victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs. In order to make peace, it has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it, specifically the vast Sinai Peninsula, to Egypt. That territory contained some of the most advanced military installations in the world, prosperous cities and settlements, and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of petroleum imports. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for over sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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the weekly Standard

The Shores of Port-au-Prince

President Obama's response to the Haitian earthquake has been sure-minded and swift. He saw the situation as "one of those moments that calls out for American leadership" and has acted accordingly.

We support the president without reservation. The moral case is self-evident; our hemisphere's poorest people have been visited with a disaster of epochal proportions, and we are in the position to offer them the greatest help. But the strategic case is also compelling. Haiti is our very near neighbor, with which we have long cultural and political connections. With a transition looming in Cuba and challenges in Central America from Venezuela among others, there is a political reason to be—and to be seen to be—a good and strong neighbor.

The earthquake struck at a particularly delicate moment for Haiti's internal security and political development. From the days of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier's "Tonton Macoutes," armed and violent gangs have been a principal source of power in Haiti. In recent years, the most notorious has been the Chimères—strong supporters of ousted president Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Press accounts from Port-au-Prince make it clear that, amidst the devastation and the chaos, with the main prison collapsed and 1,000 inmates escaped, the machetes have come out again.

The earthquake devastated the Haitian police and the leadership of the U.N. mission in Haiti. Since Aristide's ouster in 2004, the U.N. Stabilization Mission in Haiti, as many as 7,000 troops, has been conducting a painstaking counterinsurgency-like campaign to suppress the gangs. Aristide is clearly looking to exploit the new situation from his exile in South Africa. In Johannesburg last week he held a press conference to announce that he "cannot wait to be with our sisters and brothers in Haiti."

Thus President Obama's decision to include the 2nd Brigade of the 82nd Airborne and the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines among the 8,000 troops that will arrive in Haiti by the weekend is both tactically and strategically sound. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, has indicated that the total U.S. military presence in the region could soon climb above 10,000 for what is both a humanitarian relief mission and an armed stabilization mission to prevent the renewal of a violent struggle for power in Haiti.

Securing the conditions for any effort at larger-scale reconstruction is going to take a long time and considerable American involvement. President Obama is rightly committing us to this effort. But there is a danger in the president's detailing his "national security team" to make Haiti "a top priority for their department and agencies right now." The State and Defense departments have got a lot of other priorities that should not be shortchanged. And given our repeated short-changing of the military in the last two decades, meeting our responsibilities in Haiti and everywhere else won't be easy. A brigade of airborne troops and a battalion of Marines for Haiti may not seem like much. But the Army and the Marine Corps are so much smaller than they should be that the mechanism of "force generation" for various theaters is a brittle, just-in-time thing, sorely tested by the constant deployments since 9/11. President Obama's timetable for a rapid Afghanistan surge was already doubtful; Haiti will make it even more difficult.

And a successful Haiti mission will obviously demand much more than a healthy infantry contingent. The aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* will provide, essentially, an extra airport for Port-au-Prince. The USNS *Comfort* will be the largest and most advanced medical facility in Haiti. The U.S. military will bring a varied set of engineering capabilities to rebuild the port and clear streets. The *Vinson* and the large-deck Marine amphibious ship USS *Bataan* will be stocked with fleets of helicopters to ferry the needed water, medicines, shelter, and food to suffering Haitians. The U.S. Air Force, already running the Haitian air traffic control system, will deploy waves of cargo aircraft and, even more critically, the cargo-handling expertise and equipment needed to get supplies unloaded and airplanes off the overcrowded tarmac.

It is therefore no small irony—and no small problem—that in two weeks' time, the administration will be unveiling a defense review, a long-term defense plan, and a 2010 defense budget that will accept a further decline in U.S. military capabilities. Apparently two aircraft carriers are to be mothballed. The four-year defense review will describe a plan to "balance risk," as though international politics were a stock portfolio to be carefully managed, and security commitments subject to periodic divestments.

President Obama's response to the Haitian catastrophe has had a galvanizing effect. But that is largely because of the incredible capacity of the U.S. military to give substance to words. More than just "hard power" or "soft power" or "smart power," our military capabilities are the tools of action. It's good to have them. It would be better to have enough of them, now and in the future.

—Thomas Donnelly & William Kristol

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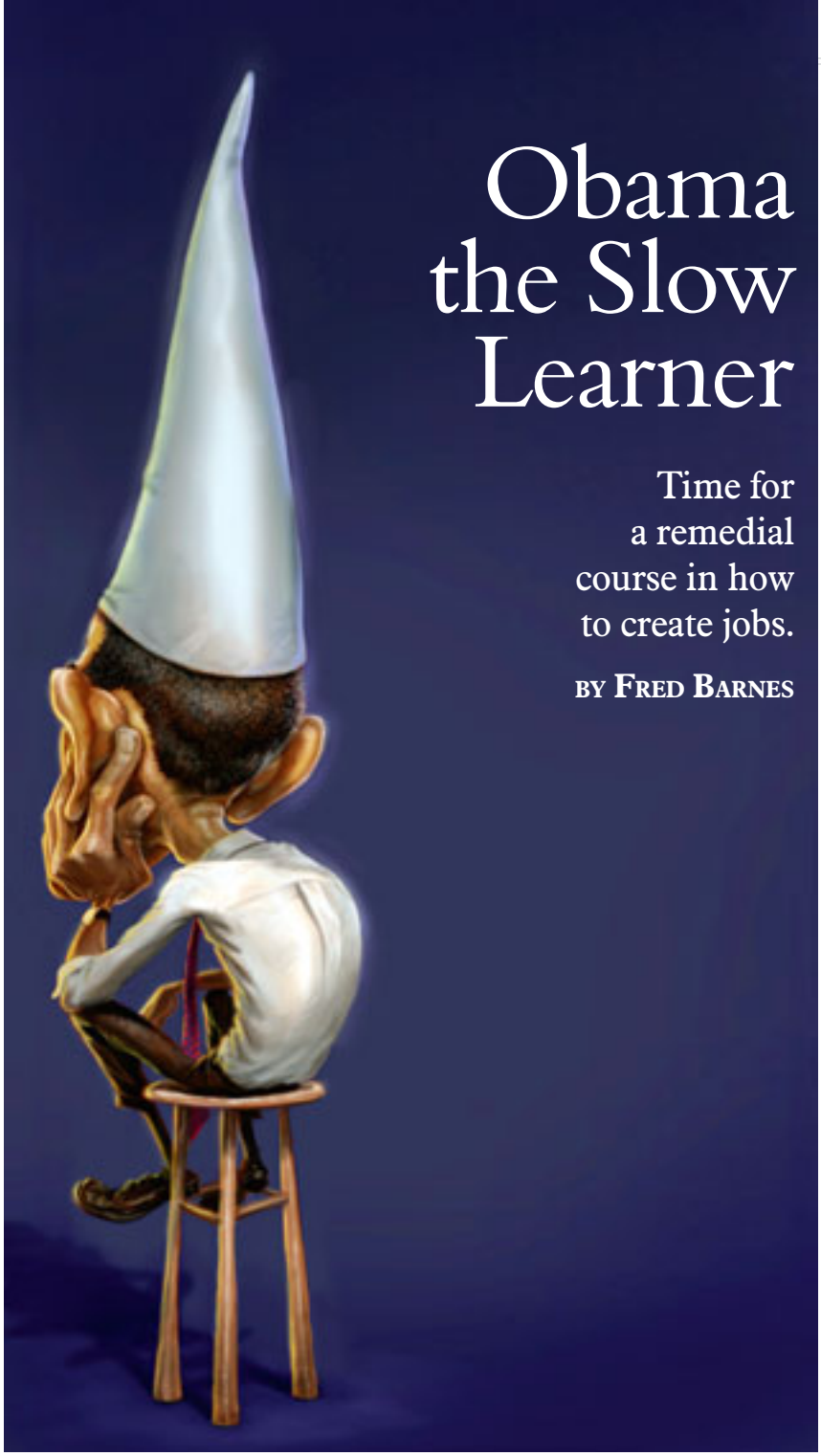

Obama the Slow Learner

Time for a remedial course in how to create jobs.

BY FRED BARNES

President Obama is a slow learner. For all his brainpower, he's saddled himself with three ideas about the economy and job creation that aren't working, either substantively or politically. And he appears to be too ideologically rigid or stubborn to consider the evidence and jettison the failed ideas.

Instead, he puts himself in embarrassing situations. On the day the Labor Department announced the unemployment rate was stuck at 10 percent and 85,000 jobs had been lost in December, Obama insisted he continues "to explore every avenue to accelerate the return to hiring." So what did he propose? Tax credits totaling $2.3 billion to create "green jobs" and a second stimulus package of $150 billion (the first one, enacted 11 months ago, cost $787 billion). This is more of the same.

Cristina Romer, the chairman of Obama's Council of Economic Advisers, managed to out-embarrass the president. Last week, she sandwiched her highly improbable claim that the administration's stimulus had created or "saved" 1.5 million to 2 million jobs between an Associated Press finding that $20 billion in stimulus funds for roads and bridges had failed to reduce the unemployment rate anywhere and a Labor Department announcement of a rise in new claims for jobless benefits.

The first of Obama's failed ideas is that government spending is the most effective method of stimulating the economy, spurring strong growth, and generating new jobs. The president needs to chat with Harvard economists Alberto Alesina and Silvia Ardagna on this subject. They studied dozens of examples of economic stimulation between 1970 and 2007 in 21 countries, including the United States.

Their findings are unequivocal. "Fiscal stimuli based upon tax cuts are more likely to increase growth than those based on spending increases," they wrote in a paper revised and published last October. "We would argue that the current stimulus package in the U.S. is too much tilted in the direction of spending rather than tax cuts." Indeed it is, and Obama's paltry tax cuts aren't the kind of across-the-board reductions in individual and corporate income tax rates that have revived sluggish economies by incentivizing private investment and stirring job creation.

Another finding by the economists bears on a separate aspect of Obamanomics, deficit reduction. "Spending cuts are much more effective than tax increases in stabilizing the debt and avoiding economic downturns," they said. "In fact, we uncover several episodes in which spending cuts adopted to reduce deficits have been associated with economic expansions rather than recessions."

This, too, would probably be news to Obama. Spending cuts, like tax cuts, aren't his strength. He plans to let Bush tax cuts on personal income,

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GARY LOCKE

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dividends, and capital gains expire in 2011 for individuals making more than $250,000 annually—that is, for those most likely to invest. Their taxes will increase. And Obama favors other tax hikes: on banks, medical device manufacturers, health insurers, high-cost health insurance plans.

What Obama would learn from a chat with Alesina and Ardagna is pretty simple: Do the opposite of what you're doing now. You want to stimulate economic growth and job creation, then cut tax rates across the board. You want to reduce the budget deficit and slow growth of the national debt, then cut spending. The economists have empirical evidence to support the effectiveness of this approach.

In her heart of hearts, Romer might agree. The two economists note that as an academic before she joined the Obama administration, Romer had found in her own research that "tax increases are contractionary." They impede economic growth.

The second fizzling idea involves clean energy and green jobs. Obama is passionate about them. They dominate his economic thinking. He has promised to produce 5 million green jobs—building wind turbines and solar panels, weatherizing buildings, manufacturing batteries for hybrid cars, and so on. The new $2.3 billion tax credit "will likely generate 17,000 jobs," Obama said, "and the roughly $5 billion more that we'll leverage in the private sector investments could help create tens of thousands of additional jobs." On top of that, the stimulus is already pouring billions into green jobs.

Yes, it's true the government can create jobs. But the billions spent on subsidized jobs is money that can't be invested in sectors of the economy that are productive (and job-creating) without government assistance. In Spain, an economist found that for every green job created by the government, 2.2 jobs have been lost in the private economy.

But there's a bigger flaw in Obama's obsession with green jobs. He told a group of investors that tax incentives aren't needed to revive the economy. Instead, government spending on clean energy and green jobs will be a "game changer." Its success will be the catalyst for private investment to pour untold billions into the clean energy industry, spark economic growth, and produce those 5 million jobs. This is pure fantasy.

The third idea is that Obama and his advisers can ease the political pain from the weak economic recovery by blaming President Bush, who left office a year ago. The Bush excuse is tempting because a majority of Americans believe he is more responsible for today's bad economic conditions than Obama. A Quinnipiac poll in early January found 55 percent blame Bush, 20 percent Obama.

But fingering Bush doesn't get Obama off the hook. Quinnipiac also found 54 percent disapprove of Obama's handling of the economy (41 percent approve), an increase from 46 percent in October and 33 percent in March. Among independents, Obama fares even worse, as 61 percent disapprove of his economic stewardship.

The inescapable conclusion is the Bush excuse doesn't work anymore. Quinnipiac's Peter Brown noted that Democratic candidates for governor last November in New Jersey and Virginia attacked Bush on the economy. "It didn't work for Corzine (in New Jersey), that's for sure," Brown said. "And it didn't work in Virginia."

Obama admires the "bold, persistent experimentation" of President Roosevelt in pursuing the New Deal. He'd be smart to try some experimentation himself, perhaps moving in a new and different direction in economic policy. Given the evidence, that would be the smart thing to do. And he is smart, isn't he? ♦

A Switch in Time to Save Nine

Memo to House Dems: Just say 'no' to Obamacare.

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON & ANDY WICKERSHAM

"The Democratic Party is lashed to health reform—even in the face of polls showing tepid public support." Thus *Politico*'s Carrie Brown paraphrases senior Democratic aides. As unappealing as that predicament may sound, Brown writes that those same aides say "it would be politically disastrous to flip-flop now."

Not so. What would be politically disastrous for Democratic congressmen is to keep turning a deaf ear to the American people and to forge ahead with a highly unpopular bill. Among the mantras that might help Democrats emerge victorious in November, this one isn't likely to top the list: *The people don't want it, so we'd better give it to them*.

President Obama has echoed this line of thought. In a speech to House Democrats on January 14, he said,

> [I know] some of you have gotten beaten up at home. . . . But I also know what happens once we get this . . . bill into law: The American people will suddenly learn that this bill does things they like and doesn't do things people have been trying to say it does.

So we're to believe that after months of extended debate and discussion, the American people would "suddenly" learn that this bill—which wouldn't go into effect in any

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meaningful way until 2014—is really not so bad. At least the president doesn't pitch such fanciful comments directly to the American people.

All wishful thinking aside, Americans know that the bill would raise spending, taxes, deficits, premiums, and overall health costs; would cut Medicare and cost jobs; and would inject the federal government into the historically and rightfully private relationship between patient and doctor. None of this would change simply because President Obama puts his signature on the bill.

In truth, the president and his aides are happy to sacrifice a few dozen congressional Democrats on the altar of Obamacare. They are focused on three immediate goals: passing a very unpopular bill before its window of opportunity closes, increasing the federal government's power over our society, and giving President Obama something to talk about in his State of the Union address.

But individual House Democrats care a great deal about their own fate. And it's not too late for them. Evidence from 1994 suggests that Democrats who opposed Hillarycare were largely spared by the voters. It was those who supported it who felt the voters' wrath.

In Hillarycare's wake in 1994, the more conservative Democrats did far better than run-of-the-mill Democrats—even though the opposite is normally true (see our "Real Lessons of 1994," in the December 21, 2009, Weekly Standard). This time around, nothing will mark a Democratic member as one who should be spared more than his final vote on Obamacare. Contrary to the not-so-helpful advice of senior Democratic aides, many members could save their own seats with just one vote.

So, allow us to introduce nine House Democrats who desperately need to cast that crucial "no" on Obamacare to save their congressional careers. All of these members voted "yes" on Obamacare the first time around. Their final vote will be where the rubber hits the road.

Tom Perriello (Va.) represents a district that Republican presidential candidates have won in three straight elections—twice by double-digits. The same is true for John Salazar (Colo.), Chris Carney (Pa.), Brad Ellsworth (Ind.), Zack Space (Ohio), and Alan Mollohan (W.Va.). These are not districts that want Obamacare.

In addition, Perriello, Salazar, Carney, Space, and Mollohan represent districts with high numbers of seniors. Polls show that America's seniors particularly dislike the proposed bill, perhaps because they don't relish having $800 billion siphoned out of Medicare and spent on Obamacare—which is what the Congressional Budget Office says would happen in the bill's real first decade (2014 to 2023).

In truth, the president and his aides are happy to sacrifice a few dozen congressional Democrats on the altar of Obamacare. But individual House Democrats care a great deal about their own fate. And it's not too late for them.

Baron Hill (Ind.) represents a district that has gone Republican by an average of 11 percentage points in the last three presidential elections. He is also one of four official leaders of the Blue Dogs, a self-described "fiscally conservative" group of Democrats. In addition to its effect on his own prospects, his vote on Obamacare will go a long way toward showing whether Blue Dogs believe in fiscal conservatism in reality, or only in press releases.

Kathleen Dahlkemper (Pa.) represents another district that Republicans have swept in the past three presidential elections. In addition, 39 percent of her district's seniors are enrolled in Medicare Advantage. In its real first decade, according to CBO projections, Obamacare would cut Medicare Advantage benefits by an average of $21,000 per person.

That's a new car worth of lost benefits for seniors—unless they live in South Florida. Thanks to the infamous "Gator Aid" deal struck behind closed doors in the Senate, seniors in large parts of the Sunshine State would be exempted from these cuts. But those in Rep. Dahlkemper's district, like most seniors across the other 49 states, wouldn't be so fortunate.

Earl Pomeroy's district—the entire state of North Dakota—doesn't just "lean" Republican. North Dakotans favored Republican candidates by an average of 21 points in the last three presidential elections. Pomeroy doesn't seem to read the writing on the wall. He told *Politico* on January 15 that he just wants to see the debate end—"We need to move on." If Pomeroy doesn't switch his vote on Obamacare, North Dakota voters will likely give him the chance to move on.

There are other members besides the nine above who would probably vote "no" on Obamacare if they listened to their constituents—members like Joe Donnelly (Ind.), Bill Foster (Ill.), Steve Driehaus (Ohio), Melissa Bean (Ill.), and Steve Kagen (Wis.), all of whom are in highly competitive districts.

Furthermore, other Democrats who have already voted "no" on Obamacare may need their constituents to remind them that now is no time to go wobbly—members like Scott Murphy (N.Y.), Larry Kissell (N.C.), John Adler (N.J.), Collin Peterson (Minn.), and John Barrow (Ga.).

Voters can be quite forgiving of members who go astray but who correct their course in the end. But they have long memories when members go astray at key moments and fail to correct themselves when they have the chance. To survive Election Day, Democratic congressmen in competitive districts need to give voters a reason to forgive, rather than a reason to remember. ♦

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Costa Rica's new national stadium, made by China

While Washington Sleeps

Beijing expands its influence in Latin America.

BY JAIME DAREMBLUM

While riding in a taxi in my native Costa Rica recently, I saw the country's magnificent new national soccer stadium rising—it is scheduled to open later this year. The Chinese government bankrolled the $83 million stadium project after Costa Rica ended its diplomatic recognition of Taiwan and launched official relations with Beijing. Journalists have referred to the stadium as a "gift" from China to Costa Rica. And, as my cab driver told me, the rulers in Beijing sent hundreds of Chinese workers to do the construction work.

The Costa Rican soccer stadium is a symbol of Beijing's growing interest in Latin America and its quasi-colonial attitude toward the developing world at large. Over the past decade, China has flooded Latin America, Africa, and Asia with investment. While it has not brought the same technological benefits as U.S. or European investment, it *has* brought an influx of low-wage Chinese workers. The arrival of these workers has complicated the economic impact of Chinese-funded development projects; it has also fostered social tensions in the recipient countries. "In some countries," the *New York Times* reported in December, "local residents accuse the Chinese of stealing jobs, staying on illegally, and isolating themselves by building bubble worlds that replicate life in China."

At a basic level, China's overseas investment binge has been driven by its domestic demand for raw materials. In a March 2008 cover story titled "The New Colonialists," the *Economist* observed that China uses more than one-fourth of the world's aluminum, a third of the world's steel, and half the cement. Rapid economic growth has given China a voracious appetite for such commodities.

While the U.S. Congress is dithering and refusing to support free trade deals with Colombia and Panama, Beijing is aggressively expanding its trade relations across the Western Hemisphere. According to the *Latin Business Chronicle*, China's overall trade with Latin America grew by 40 percent between 2007 and 2008; it was more than three times higher in 2008 than in 2004. Between 2007 and 2008, Latin American exports to China increased by 41 percent. They "grew by more than four times compared with exports to the United

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States last year and more than three times compared with exports to the European Union."

China signed a free trade agreement with Chile in 2005, and last year it signed one with Peru. These are Beijing's first trade agreements with countries outside its home region. The Chinese are currently negotiating a trade agreement with Costa Rica. Last March, Uruguayan president Tabaré Vázquez traveled to China and solidified an expansion of trade and investment cooperation. In May, the Brazilian trade minister announced that China had become Brazil's biggest trading partner (passing the United States), shortly before Brazilian president Lula da Silva visited Beijing and completed several bilateral agreements. Prior to leaving for Asia, Lula told reporters that his China trip represented "one of the most important I am going on to defend a new economic order and a new commercial policy in the world," according to Agence France-Presse. By boosting trade with these countries, China has improved its access to abundant supplies of copper (from Chile), zinc (from Peru), meat (from Uruguay), iron ore (from Brazil), and other commodities.

Beijing has also increased economic cooperation with the leftist countries that belong to Hugo Chávez's Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas, particularly Bolivia and Ecuador. Those two countries may seem strategically inconsequential up here, but the Chinese government is eager to benefit from Bolivia's lithium and Ecuador's oil. Beijing has agreed to develop Bolivia's first communications satellite, which will reportedly cost around $300 million, and a Chinese firm (Sinohydro Corporation) has been contracted to build a $2 billion hydroelectric plant in Ecuador.

China has already constructed a $400 million communications satellite for Venezuela. (It launched in October 2008, and the Chávez regime assumed control of it in January 2009.) Beijing and Caracas enjoy an increasingly close economic relationship, with China a massive consumer of Venezuelan oil. Last year, the Chinese and Venezuelan governments agreed to increase the size of their joint investment fund from $6 billion to $12 billion.

At a December 11 briefing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was asked about growing Chinese and Iranian activity in Latin America. "We have no problem with any country such as China engaging in economic activities—business, commerce—with any country anywhere," she said. "But we do want governments to drive hard bargains. We don't want to see corruption that benefits the fortunes of a few leaders and undermines the sustainability of the economy and the environment and the natural resources of any country."

> While Obama has promoted greater military cooperation with Colombia, it seems that the labor unions have effectively been given control of U.S. trade policy, which explains why the president has been unable to make any real progress on hemispheric trade.

Clinton then spoke of Iran in much harsher terms, denouncing the Iranian regime as the world's chief terror sponsor and warning that it would be "a really bad idea" for Latin American countries to embrace Ahmadinejad & Co. "If people want to flirt with Iran, they should take a look at what the consequences might well be for them," she added.

As Clinton indicated, Tehran's agenda in Latin America—particularly the strategic partnership with Chávez that has undermined international sanctions against Iran and helped Hezbollah establish a presence in Venezuela—is far more worrisome than Beijing's. Still, given all the uncertainty about China's global and regional intentions and its support for brutal dictatorial governments (Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Burma), its headlong rush into the Western Hemisphere should raise at least some concerns, especially as Latin American officials are frustrated with Washington's lack of engagement in the region.

When President Bush took office in 2001, he talked of forming a Free Trade Area of the Americas. Today, Congress won't even ratify bilateral free trade agreements with Colombia and Panama. The Obama administration insists that it wants to finalize these deals, but Democratic lawmakers are not cooperating. While Obama has promoted greater military cooperation with Colombia, it seems that the labor unions have effectively been given control of U.S. trade policy, which explains why the president has been unable to make any real progress on hemispheric trade, and indeed why he has made several protectionist mistakes (such as canceling a trucking program with Mexico).

Meanwhile, the Chinese keep increasing their economic activities in the region. Despite its apparent "diplomatic truce" with Taiwan, one of China's long-term strategic goals in Latin America is to encourage countries that still have formal relations with Taipei (such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Paraguay) to end those relations and "transfer" official recognition to Beijing. China refuses to have official relations with countries that recognize Taiwan.

The Chinese push into the Americas is no cause for panic—after all, Latin American trade with China has raised living standards and promoted GDP growth around the region—but it should compel U.S. policymakers to reinvigorate Washington's commitment to hemispheric trade liberalization. It is quite discouraging to think that China's Communist rulers are more enthusiastic than the U.S. Congress about trading with Latin America. ♦

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When Harry Meets Sue

Sue Lowden—or any Republican—has a good chance to beat Harry Reid. BY KENNETH Y. TOMLINSON

For a sense of the depth of political trouble Harry Reid faces back home—the latest poll shows more than half of Nevadans have an "unfavorable" view of him—you need only read the accounts of Democrats on the Las Vegas City Council discussing the ethics of buying off senators to support Obamacare.

"To me, that's completely illegal," fumed Councilman Gary Reese. "Senators are giving other senators large amounts of money for their votes."

"Can they do that?" he asked rhetorically.

"They've done it," declared popular mayor Oscar Goodman.

Of course the Senate majority leader doing the vote buying is none other than their own Harry Reid. Among the schemes these Las Vegas leaders found so outrageous: More than $300 million in new Medicaid funds for Senator Mary Landrieu in what is being called the "Louisiana Purchase"; another $100 million in extra Medicaid and tax breaks for Nebraska (the "Cornhusker Kickback") to get the vote of Senator Ben Nelson.

This is the same Harry Reid who once defended his support of home state pork barrel spending by saying, "Would they rather that money go to New Orleans?" The problem for Reid is that since he began handing out favors to buy support for Obamacare, Nevadans have noted that their money *is* going more and more to New Orleans—and Omaha and Little Rock. When Republican senator Paul Laxalt left office in 1987, Nevada got back 98 cents for every dollar Nevadans paid to the federal Treasury. Now the state receives 65 cents—leading some to question the value of having, what Reid's TV ads are calling, "the most powerful senator in the history of Nevada."

Harry Reid has spent virtually all of the last 40 years on a government payroll. He was elected to the state assembly at age 28. Two years later in 1970 he was elected lieutenant governor. He later served (in terms of politics one might say survived) five years as chairman of the Nevada Gambling Commission in a time when the mob was involved in that industry. (Washington's best-known Nevada Republican, former GOP national chairman Frank Fahrenkopf, is actively working for Reid's reelection. Fahrenkopf is the top lobbyist for gambling interests. That's Nevada politics for you.)

In Reid's early years in Congress he was known as something of a moderate. He was described by the 1988 *Almanac of American Politics* as "somewhat conservative, especially on cultural issues" and voted for the first Gulf war. As he rose through the ranks of Senate Democrats, moderation disappeared from his playbook. He was an architect of the strategy blocking Bush judicial nominees. In 2007 he became a symbol of the destructiveness of antiwar Democrats when he declared the Iraq war to be "lost." Weeks later the Bush surge strategy made Reid's remarks obsolete.

But it has been his role as point man for President Obama's spending and health care plans that have left Reid a marked man in the 2010 campaign.

There are no fewer than 11 Republicans running for the GOP nomination to oppose Reid. Pro-Reid TV ads

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have been up for months, both from his campaign and from union-funded special interests. Even so, three of the Republicans, who have yet to do any television, are substantially ahead of Reid in the most recent Mason-Dixon poll commissioned by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

Former assembly member Sharron Angle has a five-point lead. She is a favorite of hard core conservatives though she lost her two most recent Republican primaries (for Congress in '06 and state senate in '08). She also has been damaged by links to the Church of Scientology. Running eight points ahead of Reid is Danny Tarkanian, son of the legendary (and infamous) UNLV basketball coach Jerry "the Shark" Tarkanian. Danny is a lawyer and businessman, but name identification accounts for much of his standing. As a Las Vegas political scientist noted, "If his name were Danny Smith he would not register in the polls."

Danny Tarkanian

Sue Lowden

Danny is well liked—he was the point guard on his father's first UNLV team to be ranked number one in the nation—but the name is also a negative. Under constant NCAA investigation for alleged rules infractions, the Shark was finally pushed out as the UNLV coach although he later would win a $2.5 million settlement in a lawsuit against the NCAA.

Then there is Sue Lowden, who is running ten points ahead of Reid and increasingly is becoming the face of the opposition to him. An accomplished Republican leader in the Nevada state senate, Lowden is well into her 50s, but anyone who sees her is unsurprised to learn she was once second runner-up in the Miss America pageant.

Her story is straight out of the American dream. Her grandparents arrived at Ellis Island from Lithuania early in the last century and made their way to Johnstown, Pa., where her grandfather got a job in the coal mines. He would work his way up to shipbuilding in Camden.

That's where Suzanne Pluskoski grew up, the product of Roman Catholic schooling and a single-mother who worked but did not have health insurance. Suzanne waitressed in her teens before making her way to Dunbarton College of the Holy Cross in Washington, D.C. She later graduated (magna cum laude) from American University.

How did she finance her education? With scholarships from winning beauty pageants. She won Miss D.C. in the Miss USA contest. Then she won Miss New Jersey, which took her all the way to third place in the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City.

It was during this period of fame that she was selected to join the Bob Hope 1971 Christmas Tour of Vietnam—which would be a life-changing experience, and not only because she became a Hope favorite. (He made her one of the show's stars and strongly suggested she change her name—to Sue Plummer.)

She was fascinated by the work of television journalists following the tour, and that interest would land her an unpaid internship with a small TV station in Los Angeles. Her work there led to a job as a TV reporter and soon thereafter to celebrity as Nevada's first woman news anchor.

Sue was a television natural—the *Las Vegas Sun* called her "one of the most professional news anchors in the nation"—and she had numerous opportunities to move to network jobs back East, but by then she was married (to Paul Lowden, a respected hotel/casino entrepreneur). She eventually left the demanding life of television for her four children and husband and the family business.

In 1991 the Nevada legislature passed the largest tax increase in the state's history. The state senator in Sue Lowden's district was the Democratic majority leader who had pushed for tax (and spending) increases. The next year she challenged him in an overwhelmingly Democratic district and won.

In the Nevada senate she was not afraid to challenge the status quo. She once was one of the few votes against a bloated pork spending bill. She called a committee majority "cowardly" for failing to pass a parental notification abortion bill. But she also was effective. She helped pass a workers compensation reform bill as well as a business flat tax reform measure. She became the Republican whip and chairman of the Senate taxation committee, where she blocked efforts for tax increases by simply not calling the committee into session.

In this period Paul Lowden suffered heated conflicts with the culinary union at his hotel. She was targeted by unions for defeat in 1996 and lost.

Lowden threw herself into a host of charitable causes, from the Muscular Dystrophy Association to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation to the Salvation Army to organizations helping severely challenged children. She also experienced the tragic death of one of her sons.

In 2007 she returned to politics as the state Republican chairman. There she earned the enmity of Ron Paul supporters by closing down a state convention rather than see Paul backers gain nominations to the 2008

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GOP national convention. One of the reasons Lowden's backers believe she will be tough enough to face the coming Harry Reid onslaught is she has proven politically fearless.

Even as Lowden has become the media favorite—she has appeared on Sean Hannity's radio and television shows—to win the GOP nomination in the June primary, yet another candidate has emerged with potential. He is John Chachas, a wealthy New York investment banker and former Paul Laxalt intern who has thrown himself and a million dollars of his own money into the race.

Chachas grew up in rural Nevada but has lived in the East since and has yet to move his wife and children back to the Silver State. He has another problem that in other places would be a campaign stopper. In 2007 he maxed out to candidate Barack Obama, which he tries to explain away by saying he did so to get his Obama friends to give to his candidate, Mitt Romney.

Of course, early in Harry Reid's career Sue and Paul Lowden contributed to his campaigns, but they argue that was a different time—and a different Harry Reid.

As if Reid didn't have enough problems, his eldest son Rory is the favorite to win the Democratic nomination for governor. This means there will be two Reids on the Nevada ballot this fall. This appearance of a budding dynasty is not good news for either one. As one Republican quipped to the *Washington Post*, "Two Reids don't make a right."

It's an open question whether both Reids will still be on the ballot come November. The revelation last week that Harry Reid had sat down with a couple of reporters (authors of the new book *Game Change*) to discuss the political advantages that accrued to Barack Obama from being a "light-skinned" African American "with no Negro dialect" increased talk among Democrats that he should step aside for a fresh face with a better chance to hold the seat. But with $12 million in the bank, Reid insists he's in it to the end. A bitter end, probably. ♦

Mugged by Ultrasound

Why so many abortion workers have turned pro-life.

BY JON A. SHIELDS & DAVID DALEIDEN

Abortion rights activists have long preferred to hold themselves at some remove from the practice they promote; rather than naming it, they speak of "choice" and "reproductive freedom." But those who perform abortions have no such luxury. Instead, advances in ultrasound imaging and abortion procedures have forced providers ever closer to the nub of their work. Especially in abortions performed far enough along in gestation that the fetus is recognizably a tiny baby, this intimacy exacts an emotional toll, stirring sentiments for which doctors, nurses, and aides are sometimes unprepared. Most apparently have managed to reconcile their belief in the right to abortion with their revulsion at dying and dead fetuses, but a noteworthy number have found the conflict unbearable and have defected to the pro-life cause.

In the aftermath of *Roe* v. *Wade*, second-trimester abortions were usually performed by saline injection. The doctor simply replaced the amniotic fluid in the patient's uterus with a saline solution and induced labor, leaving it to nurses to dispose of the expelled fetus. That changed in the late 1970s, when "dilation and evacuation" (D&E) emerged as a safer method. Today D&E is the most common second-trimester procedure. It has been performed millions of times in the United States.

But although D&E is better for the patient, it brings emotional distress for the abortionist, who, after inserting laminaria that cause the cervix to dilate, must dismember and remove the fetus with forceps. One early study, by abortionists Warren Hern and Billie Corrigan, found that although all of their staff members "approved of second trimester abortion in principle," there "were few positive comments about D&E itself." Reactions included "shock, dismay, amazement, disgust, fear, and sadness." A more ambitious study published the following year, in the September 1979 issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, confirmed Hern and Corrigan's findings. It found "strong emotional reactions during or following the procedures and occasional disquieting dreams."

Another study, published in the October 1989 issue of *Social Science and Medicine* noted that abortion providers were pained by encounters with the fetus regardless of how committed they were to abortion rights. It seems that no amount of ideological conviction can inoculate providers against negative emotional reactions to abortion.

Such studies are few. In general, abortion providers have censored their own emotional trauma out of concern to protect abortion rights. In 2008, however, abortionist Lisa Harris endeavored to begin "breaking the silence" in the pages of the journal *Reproductive Health Matters*. When she herself was 18 weeks pregnant, Dr. Harris performed a D&E abortion on an 18-week-old fetus. Harris felt her own child kick precisely at the moment that she ripped a fetal leg off with her forceps:

> Instantly, tears were streaming from my eyes—without me—meaning my conscious brain—even being aware of what was going on. I felt as if my

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> response had come entirely from my body, bypassing my usual cognitive processing completely. A message seemed to travel from my hand and my uterus to my tear ducts. It was an overwhelming feeling—a brutally visceral response—heartfelt and unmediated by my training or my feminist pro-choice politics. It was one of the more raw moments in my life.

Harris concluded her piece by lamenting that the pro-choice movement has left providers to suffer in silence because it has "not owned up to the reality of the fetus, or the reality of fetal parts." Indeed, it often insists that images used by the pro-life movement are faked.

(Pro-choice advocates also falsely insist that second-trimester abortions are confined almost exclusively to tragic "hard" cases such as fetal malformation. Yet a review of the literature in the April 2009 issue of the *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* found that most abortions performed after the first trimester are sought for the same reasons as first-trimester abortions, they're just delayed. This reality only intensifies the guilt pangs of abortion providers.)

Hern and Harris chose to stay in the abortion business; one of the first doctors to change his allegiance was Paul Jarrett, who quit after only 23 abortions. His turning point came in 1974, when he performed an abortion on a fetus at 14 weeks' gestation: "As I brought out the rib cage, I looked and saw a tiny, beating heart," he would recall. "And when I found the head of the baby, I looked squarely in the face of another human being—a human being that I just killed."

In 1990 Judith Fetrow, an aide at a Planned Parenthood clinic, found that disposing of fetal bodies as medical waste was more than she could bear. Soon after she left her position, Fetrow described her experiences: "No one at Planned Parenthood wanted this job. . . . I had to look at the tiny hands and feet. There were times when I wanted to cry." Finally persuaded to quit by a pro-life protester outside her clinic, Fetrow is now involved in the American Life League.

Kathy Sparks is another convert formerly responsible for disposing of fetal remains, this time at an Illinois abortion clinic. Her account of the experience that led her to exit the abortion industry (taken from the Pro-Life Action League website in 2004) reads in part:

> The baby's bones were far too developed to rip them up with [the doctor's] curette, so he had to pull the baby out with forceps. He brought out three or four major pieces. . . . I took the baby to the clean up room, I set him down and I began weeping uncontrollably. . . . I cried and cried. This little face was perfectly formed.

A recovery nurse rebuked Sparks for her unprofessional behavior. She quit the next day. Sparks is now the director of a crisis pregnancy center with more than 20 pro-life volunteers.

Handling fetal remains can be especially difficult in late-term clinics. Until George Tiller was assassinated by a pro-life radical last summer, his clinic in Wichita specialized in third-trimester abortions. To handle the large volume of biological waste Tiller had a crematorium on the premises. One day when hauling a heavy container of fetal waste, Tiller asked his secretary, Luhra Tivis, to assist him. She found the experience devastating. The "most horrible thing," Tivis later recounted, was that she "could smell those babies burning." Tivis, a former NOW activist, soon left her secretarial position at the clinic to volunteer for Operation Rescue, a radical pro-life organization.

Other converts were driven into the pro-life movement by advances in ultrasound technology. The most recent example is Abby Johnson, the former director of Dallas-area Planned Parenthood. After watching, via ultrasound, an embryo "crumple" as it was suctioned out of its mother's womb, Johnson reported a "conversion in my heart." Likewise, Joan Appleton was the head nurse at a large abortion facility in Falls Church, Virginia, and a NOW activist. Appleton performed thousands of abortions with aplomb until a single ultrasound-assisted abortion rattled her. As Appleton remembers, "I was watching the screen. I saw the baby pull away. I saw the baby open his mouth. . . . After the procedure I was shaking, literally."

The most famous abortion provider to be converted by ultrasound technology, decades ago, is Bernard Nathanson, cofounder of the National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws, the original NARAL. In the early 1970s, Nathanson was the largest abortion provider in the Western world. By his own reckoning he performed more than 60,000 abortions, including one on his own child. Nathanson's exit from the industry was slow and tortured. In *Aborting America* (1979), he expressed anxiety over the possibility that he was complicit in a great evil. He was especially troubled by ultrasound images. When he finally left his profession for pro-life activism, he produced *The Silent Scream* (1984), a documentary of an ultrasound abortion that showed the fetus scrambling vainly to escape dismemberment.

This handful of stories is representative of many more. In fact, with the exception of communism, we can think of few other movements from which so many activists have defected to the opposition. Nonetheless, the vast majority of clinic workers remain committed to the pro-choice cause. Perhaps some of those who stay behind are haunted by their work. Most, however, find a way to cope with the dissonance.

Pro-choice advocates like to point out that abortion has existed in all times and places. Yet that observation tends to obscure the radicalism of the present abortion regime in the United States. Until very recently, no one in the history of the world has had the routine job of killing well-developed fetuses quite so up close and personal. It is an experiment that was bound to stir pro-life sentiments even in the hearts of those staunchly devoted to abortion rights. Ultrasound and D&E bring workers closer to the beings they destroy. Hern and Corrigan concluded their study by noting that D&E leaves "no possibility of denying an act of destruction." As they wrote, "It is before one's eyes. The sensations of dismemberment run through the forceps like an electric current." ♦

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Defusing the Debt Bomb

Before it's too late.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

"This cannot work," says New Hampshire Republican Judd Gregg, "unless it's seen as totally bipartisan and fair."

Gregg is the ranking member of the Senate Budget Committee. He is talking about his proposal, coauthored with committee chairman Kent Conrad of North Dakota, to establish a bipartisan task force to fix America's finances. The "Bipartisan Task Force for Responsible Fiscal Action Act of 2009," the result of two years of negotiations, made its debut last month. It has 35 cosponsors. If it becomes law, Congress will have to vote on the 18-member commission's recommendations to increase revenue and restrain spending—no ifs, ands, or buts. Similar legislation is pending in the House.

"Pending" is what it is likely to stay. Though the public is increasingly concerned about the rising debt, the political class seems equally convinced that a commission is not the way to address the problem. It's a rare initiative that earns derision from both liberal bloggers and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, but that is precisely what Conrad-Gregg has done. The left says the senators have rigged the legislation to make it impossible for the commission's recommendations to pass; the right says it's window-dressing that will result in minor spending cuts and major tax increases.

All of this is meaningless, however, unless the commission gains the support of 60 senators. And that may take a while. Democrats are hesitant to endorse a commission that would restrain or means-test entitlement spending. Of the 35 cosponsors, 20 are Republicans. Gregg says the only way to get more Democratic support would be for the president to endorse the proposal. But, at this writing, the White House is more interested in a bank tax and other revenue measures than a binding commission. "Personally, I haven't heard anything from the White House," Gregg says.

Whatever the White House does, the national debt figures to be a major issue in the 2010 midterm elections. Thanks to the financial crisis, recession, and profligate spending by both Republicans and Democrats, the deficit and debt are at postwar highs. U.S. public debt is 53 percent of GDP and rising.

A new study from the Peter G. Peterson Foundation projects it will reach "85 percent of GDP by 2018; 100 percent by 2022; and 200 percent in 2038." As historian John Steele Gordon noted in *Hamilton's Blessing*, we are a long way from 1916, when John D. Rockefeller could have paid off the entire national debt out of his own pocket.

What debt can do to a society is well known. Besides the restrictions it places on future generations, excessive government borrowing crowds out private investment and can lead to higher interest rates. More and more of the budget goes to servicing the debt—money that buys nothing but satisfied creditors.

There is new evidence that massive debt hampers economic vitality. In a January 2010 paper, "Growth in a Time of Debt," economists Carmen M. Reinhart and Kenneth S. Rogoff find that, above a debt-to-GDP ratio of 90 percent, "median growth rates fall by one percent, and average growth falls considerably more." Consider Japan, where public debt hovers around 200 percent of GDP and the economy has been stagnant for a decade and counting.

Anyone who has read a paper over the last year is aware that the tools governments use to fight debt are just as unpleasant. Since spending cuts are politically unpalatable, officials hike taxes and thus reduce incentives for entrepreneurial risk-taking, investment, and research. Another tactic is inflation, a silent tax on the middle class that punishes saving. Default and currency devaluation? They are signs of second- (or third- or fourth-) rate powers.

Take Greece, for example. The new center-left government has come to power at a time of economic crisis and political upheaval. The deficit has spiked to almost 13 percent of GDP. Public debt is 113 percent of GDP and rising. Standard & Poor's has downgraded the nation's credit rating. Foreign powers are urging the government to cut expenses as a potential default looms.

It will take more than a blue-ribbon commission to avoid a Grecian fate. The only pain-free way to lower the debt burden is economic growth; that is how America recovered from World War II, when our debt-to-GDP ratio was a record 122 percent. But no one knows when the next boom will start. And the Democratic playbook of tax, spend, and regulate may delay it.

Another precedent suggests a happier ending, however. The divided government of the mid-to-late 1990s cut spending, limited tinkering with the economy, and presided over a tech boom that poured money into government coffers. The lesson is plain. Want to defuse the debt bomb? Elect a Republican Congress. ♦

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The Roots of Obama Worship

Auguste Comte's Religion of Humanity finds a 21st-century savior

By James W. Ceaser

Barack Obama has now been center stage for two years—one as a presidential candidate (and president elect) and one as president. Americans have begun to take their measure of the man, judging him to have been a remarkable success in his first role and struggling in his second. Obama recently awarded himself the grade of "a good, solid B plus" for his performance in office, but the public is not as lenient. The gap in the assessment between Obama the candidate and Obama the president is enormous. Having entered office with a public approval of 70 percent, he has fallen today below 50 percent, the steepest such decline at this point of any first-term president in the postwar period. Obama also has the lowest approval rating at the end of a president's first year.

A drop in some degree in public approval is not unusual and might even be regarded as natural. Campaigns feed on dreams, governing confronts realities. But Obama's decline appears to hold greater significance than for past presidents, as it reflects a qualitative change in perception of his image. This shift became clear during his acceptance last month of the Nobel Peace Prize, an award that was proposed just as he took office and that reflected the heady expectations of the campaign. In Oslo, Obama was a much-diminished figure, compelled by the public's judgment of his record to concede that "my accomplishments are slight." The actor Will Smith, invited to perform at a gala honoring the president, was one of many forced to respond to the awkward question of whether Obama merited his award. His answer, obviously in the affirmative, harked back to the spirit of the campaign: "Barack Obama as an idea marks an evolutionary flash point for humanity."

Smith's comment holds the key to explaining the gap between the two Obamas. The 2008 campaign was an event that unfolded on an entirely different plane from ordinary politics. It signaled the emergence on a worldwide scale of the "Religion of Humanity," for which Obama became the symbol. What Americans have discovered is that being the representative of this transpolitical movement does not fit easily, if it fits at all, with serving as president of the United States.

There is, to be sure, a conventional explanation for the Obama gap that focuses entirely on American politics. The storyline is by now familiar. In an epic journey, Obama came from nowhere, and against all odds, to capture the presidency. His campaign, which was so brilliant in building enthusiasm and attracting support, did little to provide Americans with a clear idea of where he planned to take the country. The result has been a disconnect between Obama as candidate and as president.

This explanation clearly has merit. The Obama campaign was not programmatic—it had no slogan like Clinton's "New Democrat" in 1992 or George W. Bush's "Compassionate Conservatism" in 2000—but thematic. Obama's appeal was organized around two general notions: promoting "change" and fostering a new tone of politics (reform, transparency, and especially postpartisanship). "Change" accommodated many different expectations. For this reason, as late as the time that Obama took office, it was unclear whether it meant pragmatic and incremental adjustment or fundamental transformation. The promise of a new style of politics, a ploy that dates all the way back to the "outsider" campaigns of Ross Perot, was one that Obama quickly tossed aside. Indeed, on the core issue that once defined reform politics—campaign finance regulation—he did not even bother to wait for the election, but exempted himself before the final campaign began.

Yet even if all this is true, it cannot fully account for the decline in Obama's approval ratings. For one thing, it has never been considered a requirement of American politics to wage programmatic campaigns. Candidates like Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 have not only run and won with thematic campaigns, but also gone on to succeed quite well as presidents. For another, when all is said and

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done Americans have shown that they can be surprisingly forgiving about "process" and "tonal" transgressions. The discovery that Barack Obama is a partisan who cuts deals behind the scenes with big interests may be dismaying, but it is no more shocking than learning that there was gambling going on in Rick's Café Americain.

There is therefore a need for an explanation that goes beyond the conventional one. When the history of this period is written, the 2008 campaign will almost certainly be seen as a watershed event in cultural history, above and beyond any connection it had to American politics, when a worldwide movement congealed to display its enthusiasm for Barack Obama. This perspective will also require a reassessment of the place of Obama. To be sure, the campaign will continue in one respect to be regarded as being all about Obama. This has been Obama's perception, and understandably so. Only the most rare of persons, after being the object for over a year of such unrelenting adulation, could have resisted the temptation to think that the world revolved around him. Barack Obama is clearly not that person. His speeches and remarks are filled with references to himself in a ratio that surpasses anything yet seen in the history of the American presidency. But in another respect, the 2008 campaign was about something much larger than Barack Obama. The character of the event will not be grasped until the focus begins to shift from Barack Obama to the yearning for Barack Obama. It is in the thoughts and actions of those who adored him that the most interesting and important dimension of the campaign took place.

The 2008 campaign was about something much larger than Barack Obama. The character of the event will not be grasped until the focus begins to shift from Barack Obama to the yearning for him.

The rise of the Religion of Humanity is what best describes this event. This strange term designates an actual sect, now defunct, that enjoyed a considerable following and prestige in intellectual circles in the 19th century. John Stuart Mill was a prominent convert, pronouncing the "*culte de l'humanité* [to be] capable of fully supplying the place for a religion, or rather (to say the truth) of *being* a religion." In America, where the religion wore the respectable label of the "Church of Humanity," the acolytes included the well-known journalist David Croly and his son Herbert, the founder and longtime editor of the *New Republic*. If it were not for the Religion of Humanity, Americans today might not have the pleasure of reading Jonathan Chait on "The Rise of Republican Nihilism" or E.J. Dionne "In Praise of Harry Reid."

Mill and Croly were both intellectual disciples of the French social philosopher Auguste Comte (1798-1857). Though rarely studied in America today, Comte bequeathed an enormous legacy. He was the first to simplify and popularize the idea of a progressive movement of history, which he described as proceeding through three great epochs: the age of theological thinking, the age of metaphysical thinking, and the age of scientific or "Positivistic" thinking. ("Positivism," referring to the scientific mindset and approach, was one of Comte's many linguistic inventions.) The inevitable march of humanity (still with a small h) through these stages, albeit at different rates in different places, was the great story of history. Variations among nations and groups might continue, but they paled in significance next to the common destiny of humanity. Those who continued to view the world in terms of nations and their conflicts—Comte called them "retrogrades"—were caught in old thinking, unable to grasp the new global order being formed by the forces generated by Positivism.

Comte argued that it was time to expand man's scientific knowledge of the physical world to the social realm. A new science of society, "sociology" (Comte's term), was the latest and highest of all the sciences. Possession of knowledge of the laws of social movement was what ideally bestowed the title to rule. Comte and his circle were never much impressed by democracy and favored instead one system or another of governance by experts. (Saint-Simon, for whom Comte worked for many years, once proposed running society with "Councils of Newton.")

But there was an important twist to Comte's praise of science. In contrast to many who thought that the scientific method and scientific values were sufficient to bind society together, Comte insisted that people had to *believe*. As faith in the transcendent was no longer possible in the Positivist age, he called for "replacing God with Humanity." The aim of this religion without God was to build a global community that assured the betterment of man's lot. Postulating this objective as an ideal is what Comte meant by Humanity (now with a capital H).

Given the suspicion that many today hold toward religion of any kind, Comte's insistence on the need for

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a religion might seem to run counter to modern sensibilities. But set the word religion aside, and it is just on this point that Comte's thought proves most prescient. The combination of confidence in science and a religious-like enthusiasm was the hallmark of the Obama campaign, just as it is the most salient characteristic of the contemporary progressive impulse. Confidence in experts and the pledge to "restore science to its rightful place" went hand in hand with chants of "Yes we can" and with celebrations of the gift of charismatic leadership.

What was more farfetched was Comte's plan to establish an organized sect with churches, clergy, and calendar of Positivist saints. His movement in fact never reached much beyond the intellectual elites. But even here Comte's thought may be less naïve than it first appears, as he envisaged an initial period of syncretism in which existing Christian sects would adopt the fundamental premises of the new religion without officially becoming part of it. What better describes the theology of many contemporary liberal churches whose full energy in 2008 went into proselytizing for Obama?

There is one point, however, on which Comte's idea of the Religion of Humanity, was inadequate. Social improvement, however admirable, was too elevated a goal to mobilize people and sustain their devotion. The contemporary movement has gone beyond the original to discover a new and firmer basis for promoting solidarity in the great cause of confronting climate change. Here is a project that can unite people in waging the moral equivalent of war against a common threat. The liturgy has been vastly strengthened by allowing the ecological soldiers to glimpse the moment of their glorious triumph, when, in candidate Obama's words, "the rise of the oceans began to slow and the planet began to heal." This moment marked the dividing time between the pre- and post-Obama eras. The cause is also perfect in its "positivity," since the threat can only be properly gauged by the disinterested research of the "best science," the practitioners of which must be granted a central role in planning strategy. Although the recent Copenhagen conference on climate change ended in disappointment (even with Obama's last minute intervention), the cause has lost none of its appeal. It is the subtext of James Cameron's blockbuster *Avatar*, which represents the next "flashpoint" in the evolutionary development of Humanity.

Obama awakened to the realization that he was no longer running merely for president of the United States. He was being selected for the much grander 'office' of leader of a new world community.

The confluence of the Religion of Humanity with the Obama campaign has every appearance of being a providential event. It was prepared by the advent in the 1990s of an ongoing world public opinion, something that had never previously existed. The focus was on views and attitudes about America, a symbol that was constructed under the guidance of the intellectual vanguard. This symbol, known as anti-Americanism, was given a human face in the first decade of this century when it was joined to the personage of George W. Bush. It was invested with every element deemed to be retrograde: the primacy of the nation, a claim of exceptionalism, and a set of principles—"nature and nature's god"—grounded in theology and metaphysics. The world was depicted as comprising two fundamental "substances," Bush and non-Bush, that were locked in a cosmic conflict.

Barack Obama's coming served as the galvanizing force to carry the day for the cause of progress. Although Obama never conceived himself as playing a universal role when he launched his presidential bid, he awakened at some point in the campaign to the realization that he was no longer running merely for president of the United States. He was being selected for the much grander "office" of leader of a new world community. His credentials for this position were impeccable. Humanity as a concept formally includes everyone, but it is especially favorable to those who have previously been excluded from full recognition. (The old aristocrats, in Comte's description, were hardly part of Humanity.)

Having decided as a young man to identify himself as African-American, Obama was in the category of the dispossessed, a member of a race against which some of the greatest crimes in history were perpetrated. This fact immediately commended him to Western intellectuals at the same time that it enabled him to be the plausible representative of the teeming masses of the Third World. No one from a privileged race could ever have fulfilled this role. Just as important was the fact that Obama is not purely African-American, but a product of amalgamation, what the French approvingly call *métissage* and Harry Reid describes less felicitously as being "light skinned." Obama is postracial or, as he himself put it, a "mutt." This look, favored among international fashion models, represents physically the common denominator of humanity. Religiously, too, Obama, though a Christian, has ties through his father to Islam, a fact he proclaims on some of his

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overseas trips. He was the embodiment of all men. Finally, while holding these biological qualities of both the dispossessed and of humanity, Obama is a member of the clerisy of the Religion of Humanity, having been credentialed at Columbia, Harvard, and Chicago and stamped as one holding progressive views.

In what measure has Barack Obama as president embraced this other role of leader of Humanity? Americans are now wondering. These concerns first came to light in unsympathetic reactions to Obama's foreign policy speeches, especially those delivered on foreign soil, that made a point of apologizing for American missteps and wrongs. Realists and pragmatists dismissed these criticisms, arguing that the new approach served America's interests by lowering the strident tone of the Bush years, thereby opening doors to engagement with other leaders and defusing anti-Americanism. In addition, it was said that Obama could leverage his position as a leader of humanity to help solve general problems like nuclear proliferation and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Obama's two offices complemented one another, promoting the goals of Humanity while serving America's interest. By standing above or outside America, he could best help America.

Whatever the plausibility of these arguments, their merit over the past year has been tested and found wanting. Obama's authority as leader of Humanity has not borne the fruit that many had hoped for, and in any case—as his two trips to Copenhagen have made clear—his standing in the world is now in a free fall. Americans who thought that it is one thing to offer an initial hand to the likes of a Chávez or an Ahmadinejad think it something quite different to continue to offer it after the hand has been flagrantly rejected. To persist is to invite dishonor, both for the office of the president and for the nation. Realism dictates an adjustment. The fact that such a change has been so slow in coming suggests that it is not realism that is Obama's guiding light, but a commitment to the dogmas of the Religion of Humanity.

Another instance of the conflict Americans now perceive between the two roles comes in the form of Obama's repeated efforts to blame George W. Bush (or "the last eight years") for every difficulty or problem that the nation confronts. On first encounter, there would seem to be nothing more in this tactic than an ordinary political calculation designed to win support and deflect criticism. But this technique, which is standard fare for a presidential campaign, at a certain point is bound to appear unpresidential, not only when indulged in before foreign audiences where it seeks to purchase a personal reputation for impartiality at the expense of national unity, but also in domestic affairs. It displays weakness by evidencing a desire to evade responsibility, especially for a president who based his Inaugural Address on calling for "a new era of responsibility." Opinions may differ on whether the "blame Bush first" policy is obsessive or demagogic, but it is by now clear that it is counterproductive. Persistence bespeaks something more than political miscalculation. For the Religion of Humanity, the attack on Bush, both the man and the "substance," is a matter of dogma. If Obama were to desist, he would relinquish his higher office.

The same pressure to hew to the dictates of the new religion is evident in the efforts of Obama's intellectual supporters to save postpartisanship from the simple hoax that most now believe it to have been. Postpartisanship, we are told, never meant anything as mundane as dealing with the other party. It referred instead to working with those who embrace the consensus of the new era. It therefore explicitly excludes the bulk of the Republican party, which comprises those who cling stubbornly to their theology and metaphysics. Only those elements that have adapted or evolved qualify as potential postpartisan partners. The standard for inclusion is not an expression of popular will, but criteria supplied by the idea of progress. What has made many Americans increasingly suspicious of the office of leader of Humanity is their growing perception that it rests ultimately on contempt for the people.

The conflicting demands of the Religion of Humanity and the presidency of the United States have become most apparent in the administration's approach to dealing with the threat of Islamic terrorism. The Religion of Humanity, by its own reckoning, admits to facing challenges from two quarters: from those who have not yet fully entered the age of Positivism, which includes the terrorists, and from those who are part of the advanced world but who refuse to embrace it, which includes the likes of George W. Bush. In the present situation, these two groups are understood to have a symbiotic relationship. The existence of the terrorists is regrettable, not only because of the physical threat that they pose, but also because, by doing so, they risk strengthening the hand of those in the West who reject the Religion of Humanity. Supporters of the Religion of Humanity therefore believe they have good reason to deny or minimize the danger of terrorism in order to save the world from the even greater danger of the triumph of the retrograde forces. This is the dogmatic basis of political correctness, and Obama and his team have gone to considerable lengths by their policies and by their use of language to hide reality. But reality has a way of asserting itself, and it is becoming clearer by the day that being the leader of Humanity is incompatible with being the president of the United States. No man can serve two masters. ♦

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All Process, No Peace

The Obama administration needs to press the reset button on its Middle East diplomacy

By Elliott Abrams

Peace in the Middle East has been on the Obama administration's mind from the beginning. Two days after his inauguration the president traveled to the State Department to announce the appointment of George Mitchell as his Middle East peace negotiator. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described the administration's approach as "an intensive effort from day one." Here was the plan: Israel would freeze construction in all the settlements and in Jerusalem; Arab states would reach out to Israel in tangible ways visible to their own publics and to Israelis; and the Palestinians would do better at building political institutions, ending incitement against Israel and fighting terror. With these achievements in hand the administration would lead the parties into peace negotiations to be concluded within the president's first term. Nobel Prizes would be the frosting on the cake.

That's not how it turned out, except for the Nobel Prize. As the Obama administration begins its second year in office, its Middle East peace efforts are widely regarded as a shambles. Its initial goals have all been missed. Israelis, Palestinians, and Arab governments have lost confidence in American leadership. The challenge for Year Two will be how to get out of this mess and on to a more positive track—but that will require some candor inside the administration in assessing what went wrong.

From the start the White House—led by the president himself and his chief of staff Rahm Emanuel—has pushed hardest for Israeli concessions, a reversal of the standard pattern where the legendary Arabists in the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs bureau criticize Israel while top officials defend her. This time, those at the top—including Mitchell and Clinton—publicly and repeatedly demanded a total Israeli construction freeze. And this time, the experts in the Near Eastern Affairs bureau and in U.S. embassies throughout the Middle East were the voices of caution and realism, for whatever their biases they knew Obama's approach wouldn't work. The Arabs would not step forward. Israel's coalition politics would not permit adoption of a total freeze. What's more, once we demanded it as a precondition for new negotiations, Palestinians could demand no less. And unlike us, they would not be able to walk away from that demand when Israel predictably said no.

The great plan has collapsed, but the mystery of who exactly will be in charge of the policy in Year Two—and whether they understand what happened—is now the center of conversations all over the region. Visitors are asked "What's U.S. policy? Where is it headed? Is there a strategy?" In Israel, there is deep suspicion of the Obama administration, both at official levels and among the population at large. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to impose a partial settlement freeze should not have been a surprise despite the months of friction with Washington; for any Israeli government, relations with the United States are a central strategic matter, while a (partial) moratorium in West Bank construction is not. It is fair to say that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is as much responsible for this freeze as Barack Obama, for in the coming year Israel may have to deal with the Iranian nuclear program—and therefore needs to avoid tension with Washington whenever possible. One official of a previous Israeli government put it this way to me: "Bibi agreed to this freeze to enable Israel to concentrate on Iran without the daily background noise about the settlements."

Israel will always go far to keep relations with Washington on an even keel but that feeling is especially strong these days. The anti-Israel bias in the U.N.'s Goldstone Report—condemning Israel's conduct during the Gaza war a year ago—astonished Israelis, but what hurt them more was the acceptance by the "international community" of Goldstone's assault. His report, and the many recent efforts in Europe to have visiting Israeli officials arrested for "war crimes," reminded Israelis how isolated they are in the world and how important American support remains. So the ten-month construction moratorium—to reduce tension with Obama, and to shift the blame for refusing new peace negotiations to the Palestinians—was approved 11-1 by Israel's security cabinet.

But in Ramallah, Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas—who heads the PLO and the Fatah party—now

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An Israeli soldier guards the West Bank settlement of Elon Moreh near Nablus.

ASSOCIATED PRESS / DAN BALILTY

faces what one Palestinian observer described to me as "a double whammy." First, the United States greeted Netanyahu's compromise as a positive step and George Mitchell said it is "more than any Israeli government has done before and can help movement toward agreement between the parties," but the Palestinians instantly and vehemently rejected it. So while American officials saw the Israeli move as the basis for commencing peace negotiations, the Palestinians did not—putting them at odds with Washington. "This conditional freeze does not give Abbas the ladder he needs to climb down and resume negotiations," an associate of his said privately. Second, Israel continues to negotiate with Hamas via a German intermediary over the release of Gilad Shalit, the Israeli soldier captured in June 2006 and held since then in Gaza. The price will be Israel's release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, and if the deal goes through many Palestinians will notice that Hamas, not the Palestinian Authority, has the ability to spring people from Israeli jails.

Both developments—on settlements and prisoners—weaken President Abbas, who today seems less powerful and less close to Washington. It did not help that he reacted to the growing pressures by announcing he was tired of the frustrations of governing, wants to leave office, and will not run for reelection. Abbas's office in the "Muqata" in Ramallah—an old British police station, later Arafat's headquarters and now the site of his glassed-in mausoleum—seems increasingly the burying place of his generation's Palestinian politics as well.

So the Obama administration's Middle East adventures in 2009 came to a close with Netanyahu, whom the administration has never much liked or treated well, stronger politically; and Abbas, whom the administration wished to strengthen, weaker and talking of retirement. In Arab capitals the failure of the United States to stop Iran's nuclear program is understood as American weakness in the struggle for dominance in the Middle East, making additional cooperation from Arab leaders on Israeli-Palestinian issues even less likely. A strongly pro-American former Israeli official shook his head as he evaluated the Obama record in 2009: "This is what happens when arrogance and clumsiness come together."

But who will tell the president that his judgments have been wrong and his policy is failing? Does he recognize how much bad advice he was given last year? Who among the senior figures is likely to say to this president that George Mitchell is now associated with a policy disaster or that Rahm Emanuel's read on Israeli politics proved 180 degrees off course? Presumably no one who wishes to continue to work in the White House after that.

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What will Year Two bring? The evidence suggests that the administration, now in a hole, will keep digging: All our diplomatic activity remains dedicated to getting "peace negotiations" started. "We're going to be even more committed this year, and we're starting this new year with that level of commitment, and we're going to follow through and hopefully we can see this as a positive year in this long process," Secretary Clinton said in early January. George Mitchell, building on his dubious achievements of the past year, told Charlie Rose, "We think that the negotiation should last no more than two years. . . . Personally I think it can be done in a shorter period of time." The media, here and in the Middle East, tell of "letters of guarantee" that President Obama may send Abbas and Netanyahu, promising the Palestinians an agreement on borders in nine months and a full peace treaty in two years if only they will sit down and negotiate.

Thus far the Palestinians are adamantly refusing to start negotiations and abandon their demand for a construction freeze including in Jerusalem, in exchange for such promises. But if they do, they will find the promised time limits to be illusory—as all previous ones have been. And no matter who sits at what table, there will be no *serious* negotiations: The Israelis and Palestinians are too far apart on the core issues to reach a deal now, and the Fatah and PLO leadership (having lost the last elections to Hamas and having lost Gaza to a Hamas coup) is too weak now to negotiate compromises and sell them to the Palestinian people. If there is any form of reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, moreover, as Saudi Arabia and other Arab states continue to promote, Israel will end the talks instantly.

For two decades the "peace process" has failed to end the conflict and produce a Palestinian state. Unilateral Israeli withdrawal has also been tried, in Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005, but in both cases the vacuum was filled by terrorism: Hezbollah took over South Lebanon and Hamas conquered Gaza. Yet there is a way forward, the one sensible option never really tried: to start at the beginning rather than the end, by creating a Palestinian state from the bottom up, institution by institution, and ending with Israeli withdrawal and negotiation of a state only when Palestinian political life is truly able to sustain self-government, maintain law and order, and prevent terrorism against Israel.

This may seem like a formula for endless delay but it is in fact the fastest way forward, and it is beginning. In the West Bank, Palestinian security forces are doing more to bring law and order and fight terrorism. Economic growth continues, and foreign visitors are often surprised by the amount of construction in Ramallah and commerce in Jenin and Jericho; far from looking like Somalia or Yemen, the West Bank is increasingly prosperous. The Palestinian Authority prime minister, Salam Fayyad, describes his goal this way: "We have decided to be proactive, to expedite the end of the occupation by working very hard to build positive facts on the ground, consistent with having our state emerge as a fact that cannot be ignored. This is our agenda, and we want to pursue it doggedly."

Fayyad's push for Palestinians to build their own state themselves has angered Israeli critics who call it "unilateral," and Fayyad's rhetoric often offends them, but what good alternatives are there? To watch yet another round of negotiations end in another failure? The Obama administration gives lip service to Fayyad's approach—no one is against building Palestinian institutions—but its own emphasis for Year Two remains entirely in the wrong places. U.S. diplomacy, like Arab and European diplomacy, is all about reviving Abbas and getting him into a room with Netanyahu—not about backing serious efforts to build a Palestinian state. Thus the only way to lay the foundation for successful peace talks is ignored, and what will predictably be unsuccessful peace talks are the obsessive goal of American foreign policy.

For two decades the 'peace process' has failed to end the conflict and produce a Palestinian state. Unilateral Israeli withdrawal has also been tried and produced more terrorism.

The Obama administration rarely demonstrated the ability to shift gears and change policy in its first year. Even in the face of historic events such as the continuing demonstrations against Iran's regime, it stuck devotedly to prior plans. Can there be a learning curve? Will someone tell the president the policy isn't working and big changes are needed? Or can change come from the top down, if the president himself comes to realize what underlings are reluctant to tell him? Middle Eastern officials aren't the only people who still can't figure out the workings of the Obama White House; the mixture of campaign stalwarts, career bureaucrats, old Chicago friends, and outside advisers remains opaque. Obama White House personnel like to say the Situation Room has no windows precisely so that people can't see in. In fact it has three windows that look out at the Executive Office Building, but the error is telling: They want to preserve the sense of mystery. The problem is, the main mystery in the Middle East is whether they'll cling to a policy that has already failed or open their minds to one that has a chance of bringing serious progress. ♦

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The Long War . . . Against Bush

When the going gets tough, who's Obama gonna blame?

By Noemie Emery

Hard as it seems at times to remember, Barack Obama never ran against George W. Bush. That pleasure went to Al Gore and John Kerry, who did not seem to enjoy the experience. Obama ran in 2008, and won the election, but in 2010, into his second year as president, he still thinks he is running, and against the now-retired (and quiet) 43rd president. "He says, 'the buck stops with me,' but nearly a year into office President Barack Obama is still blaming a lot of the nation's troubles—the economy, terrorism, health care—on George W. Bush," wrote Ben Feller of the Associated Press a few weeks ago. "A sharper, give-me-some-credit tone has emerged in his language as he bemoans people's fleeting memory about what life was like. . . . 'I don't need to remind any of you about the situation we found ourselves in at the beginning of this year,' Obama told people at a Home Depot stop last month. And then he reminded them anyway." Someone should tell him he won the election, and that people will judge him not on what Bush did, but on what he is doing. And what he's been doing hasn't been all that good.

In some ways, his reaction to the near-catastrophe on Christmas Day, when a terrorist almost blew a hole in a plane over Detroit, seemed less involved with the war against terror than with the ongoing war against Bush. Trying hard not to seem too warlike or macho, he took three days before speaking, making time after tennis for what Toby Harnden of the *Daily Telegraph* called a "tepid address" in which he referred to the "alleged suspect" as an "isolated extremist" (which he was not). Then Obama went snorkeling. Only days later, when it was clear he was facing a public relations disaster, did he begin to edge by stages into a more forceful reaction, which wasn't fully unveiled until January 7, almost two weeks after the attempted attack had occurred.

Meanwhile, the Bush-blaming project had gone on apace. The *American Spectator* cited a staffer in the White House Counsel's office saying that White House aides were doing research to "show that the Bush administration had had far worse missteps than we ever could." The *New York Post* commented, "It speaks eloquently to the Obama administration's priorities that it took the White House four days to acknowledge the 'catastrophic breach of security' that led to the failed bombing of a U.S.-bound jet on Christmas Day—but a scant four hours to accuse Dick Cheney of coddling terrorists." If anything galvanizes the Obama team more than the silent George Bush, it is his vocal vice president, who has been engaging the administration in a debate about terrorism since last March. Any appearance of Cheney's brings about a quick, extended, and insult-laden rebuttal, and is good for a half-hour rant from MSNBC's Chris Matthews, in which he compares the former vice president to a "troll" known as "Cheeney" (rhymes with meanie), who crawls out of his bolt hole to blink in the light and hiss venom-filled curses at Obama.

If anything galvanizes the Obama team more than the silent George Bush, it is his vocal vice president, who has been engaging the administration in a debate about terrorism since last March.

So eager is the Obama team to cast blame upon Bush that it blames him for sins he never committed, as even reporters friendly to Obama have been forced to make clear. "Taking a decidedly different tack from his predecessor . . . Obama on Thursday took the blame for short-

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comings that led to a failed Christmas Day bombing plot," *Politico* reported. "Aides to Obama signaled that he was consciously seeking to be the anti-Bush . . . quick, transparent, willing to take the blame—all things Obama has said President George W. Bush was not." Alas, a few paragraphs later, the reporters themselves blew the whistle, reminding us of all the times Bush had taken the blame for errors—on his response to Katrina, and the reports that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction—in words like those used by Obama himself. "To the extent the federal government didn't fully do its job right, I take responsibility," he said 18 days after Katrina. "I want to know what went right and what went wrong."

To Obama, the blame-shifting appears justified, as he claims he walked into a set of disasters—two wars, plus a financial implosion—worse than what confronted Lincoln or Franklin D. Roosevelt, or anyone in the story of man. But of these two wars, one had been won (thanks to the surge, which Obama opposed), and the other had a blueprint in place based on the surge (which was opposed by most of Obama's own party), while the financial collapse was caused by both parties, and the key steps that averted disaster had already been taken by Bush. The mess was large, but not without precedent, as messes are what presidents deal with.

Roosevelt inherited a mess and then faced an existential threat to the world and the country. Truman inherited a mess, as Roosevelt had been unable to keep the Soviet Union from taking over Eastern Europe, and he was forced to make the decision to drop the first atom bomb. Truman passed a mess on to Eisenhower, who passed a mess on to Kennedy, who passed a mess on to Johnson, who passed a catastrophe on to Richard M. Nixon, as none of them had a clue what to do about the Communist threat to corrupt countries in Asia, a problem to which no workable answers would ever be found.

Even in times when the world seemed more or less peaceful—as in the Bush 41 transition to Clinton, and the Clinton transition to Bush 43—there were mild messes due to cyclical recessions, and hidden messes just waiting to surface. Clinton had problems in Bosnia and with Saddam Hussein (either leaving Saddam in power or ousting him would have turned out to be messy), and Bush 43 would be in office less than nine months when he was faced with an explosion of Islamic terrorism, a problem which prior presidents had been aware of, but of whose scope and ferocity no one could have dreamed. Obama inherited a similar mess, but the war in Iraq had been won, and Bush had developed a series of tools for meeting the terrorist threat that had prevented further attacks on U.S soil after 9/11. Iran was still there, but Saddam Hussein was no longer a problem. It was a mixed bag, but not the worst ever bequeathed a newly elected president—which the public, given time and perspective, now is beginning to see.

GLENN MCCOY / UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

And so as a tactic, the Blaming Bush mantra is starting to fade in effectiveness. It was one thing early on when it was the real Bush being weighed against the ideal Obama, who had never been tried, and so never failed at anything, and who one could dream would do everything perfectly. The real Bush against the real Obama is a whole other story, as the problems that stymied the 43rd president show no signs of yielding to the 44th's charms. The terrorists hate us, and still want to kill us. Unemployment is high, stimuli notwithstanding. Closing Guantánamo Bay

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isn't that easy. Iran and North Korea haven't unclenched their fists.

Bush's presidency was consumed by terror, and he became as one with its problems: the car bombs, the head-hackers, the terrible choices, the terrorist plots. Bush was associated with them, and some people came to believe that he caused them. Obama was supposed to make all this go away. He hasn't. It won't. Some of his choices now seem downright stupid: like bypassing jobs to focus on health care, and creating a bloated monstrosity of a reform that is very unpopular. There were other diversions of dubious merit that over time chipped away at and eroded his image and gravitas: the war on Rush Limbaugh. The war on James Crowley, the white policeman from Cambridge, Mass., who arrested Obama's friend, Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. The war on Fox News.

Early on, while Obama was still overwhelmingly popular, his team was delighted to see Cheney confront him head-on on issues involving national security, thrilled to have a grumpy old white man emerge as the face of the opposition. Surprise. The public tended to side on the issues with Cheney, whose approval ratings, though still less than healthy, started to rouse, and to rise from the depths. Meanwhile, Obama's own numbers—those of the real man, and not of the fantasy figure—started to wilt.

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Obama's approval ratings are in the mid-40s, while almost equal numbers say they strongly disliked him. Half of the country think him a failure. When asked if the country would have been better off had John McCain won the election, 35 percent of voters say yes and only 37 percent say no. Worst, when asked to compare Obama with Bush, only 43 percent think Obama is better, as opposed to the 23 percent who see no real difference, and the 30 percent who think he is worse.

One might imagine numbers like these would move the Obama team to pull the plug on the blame-fest, but one would be wrong. The *Washington Post*'s E.J. Dionne rang out the old year by urging Democrats to double down, claiming that only by painting the Bush age as a "squandered decade" that ravaged the country could Obama's fortunes be revived. "Much of the contention surrounding Barack Obama's presidency is simply a continuation of our argument over the effects of George W. Bush's time in office," he said. It isn't: It's about the spending, the deficits, the enormous expansion of federal power, and the incredible corruption, deal-making, and squalor surrounding the health care reform bill. Dionne contends Obama was elected as a rebuke to the Bush foreign policy, but John McCain, who was for the surge before Bush was, was close to Obama through most of the year, and led in the two-week window between his convention and the financial collapse. Dionne sees Obama's election as a repudiation of Bush's governing policies, but Cheney won his debates with the president, and in the past few months conservative ideas have come back. Dionne says Obama is "both the anti-Bush and the leader of the post-Bush cleanup squad," but it's a strange kind of cleanup that leaves in place the Bush defense secretary (Robert Gates), the Bush generals in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Bush prescription for the war in Afghanistan, not to mention Federal Reserve chief Ben Bernanke, the original architect in 2008 of Bush's response to the fiscal collapse. Dionne says "we have no choice but to reach a settlement about the meaning of the last 10 years"—i.e., to agree with him they have been a catastrophe—to give Obama a chance of succeeding. But Obama's ultimate success or failure will have very little to do with Bush's reputation. It will rest on his own ability to hold the line in the war against terror, restore some sense of fiscal stability, and keep the country safe from further attacks. These have very little to do with the Bush reputation. They rest in the hands of fate and Obama and have nothing to do with what anyone thinks about Bush.

Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy ran to succeed a president of the opposite party whom they did not oppose in the election but whose administrations they felt obliged to critique. Once in office, however, they dropped the subject, and concentrated on governing, without further complaints about the messes they were handed: the Communists in Eastern Europe, the Communists with the H-Bomb, the conflict in Korea, the war in Vietnam and Laos, the potentially lethal flash point and mess in Berlin. Both Ike and Jack were judged in the end to be pretty good presidents, and their era—the early Cold War—as very important. They fought the enemy, not one another, at least not in public, and not once they had taken the oath of office. The crises they faced stand up to Obama's. And back then, the buck stopped with them. ♦

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Albert and Victoria sense something is amiss, 1854

RUNE HELLESTAD / CORBIS

Britain Sees Red

The horrors of a literary genre

BY SARA LODGE

A strange plague is sweeping Britain. Mouldering corpses, their eyes glazed, their arms outstretched, are lumbering out of bookshops everywhere, intent on only one thing: consuming your brains. I refer, of course, to the recent horde of novels, set in the 19th century, but starring the ravenous Undead, who burst into ballrooms, hijack carriages, and in one instance, even obtain a majority in the House of Commons by eating the opposition. This is period romance but with extra bite: Heads are not merely turned, they are spliced; hearts are not merely broken, they are ripped from chests; guts are not merely wrenched, they are munched. Never have there emerged simultaneously so many new variations on an old crypt.

Sara Lodge, a lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, is the author, most recently, of Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Work, Play, and Politics.

Queen Victoria
Demon Hunter
by A.E. Moorat
Hodder, 400 pp., £7.99

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies
The Classic Regency Romance—Now with Ultraviolent Zombie Mayhem
by Jane Austen
and Seth Grahame-Smith
Quirk, 320 pp., £ 8.99

Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter by A.E. Moorat is perhaps the oddest of these novels. In it, Queen Victoria (1819-1901), Britain's longest-ruling monarch, is revealed to have been far from a dumpy, frumpy, and grumpy paragon of domestic life, in fact a ruthless and deadly single-combat fighter, wearing a katana and a spin-saw beneath her crinoline. The menaces she faces include not only zombies but werewolves and succubi: The whole country, it emerges, is threatened by an age-old conspiracy of demons who intend to usurp the throne and turn Britain into a lawless land of violence and misery.

Victoria must face the difficulty not only of ruling the country and raising a family, but of rescuing her beloved Prince Albert, who is kidnapped by the forces of evil, and of learning that she (shock! horror!) is herself half-demon, on her mother's side. Since Prince Albert is also half-demon, this

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raises the awkward possibility that their progeny will have red eyes, bad teeth, and terrible table manners.

When not elaborating on Victoria's antics with a broadsword, the story follows the adventures of Lord Quimby, an amoral aristocrat and sexual adventurer, whose invention of a liquid that can bring the dead back to life is behind the accidental epidemic of zombies in central London. The Quimby episodes in *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* aim at black humor. For example, Perkins, Quimby's faithful servant, is unfortunately eviscerated by a zombie prostitute. Quimby, however, revives him, and Perkins, though now himself a zombie, remains a remarkably tactful and efficient butler. Since one of Perkins's own legs has been devoured, Quimby resourcefully attaches one of those formerly belonging to Sugar, the prostitute. Thus Perkins, a manservant of superhuman strength but diffident social demeanor, wears beneath his Victorian trousers a female prosthetic limb with red painted toenails.

This is surely the transgressive pleasure on which the new genre of 19th-century zombie fiction is based: We look up the reputedly decorous skirts of our ancestors and discover all manner of concealed parts. The Victorian woman is hiding a broadsword; the Victorian man is hiding a broad's leg.

Quimby and Queen Victoria finally meet at the end of the novel when Quimby, facing blackmail from the wicked Sir John Conroy and his demon masters, unwisely agrees to transform a number of MPs into zombies, allowing the antireform wing of the government to gain a majority in resisting the Factory Bill. Alas, the Monsters of Parliament run amok and the cradle of democracy becomes a scene of carnage, as honorable members are severed and swallowed.

Moorat particularly relishes entrails: Guts unspool in his novel like reels of old-fashioned film, and human intestines are wolfed down, used to pull victims to their doom, and even to strangle them. (Indeed, one might with justice say that Moorat's sentences abound in colons and semicolons.) Realizing that his survival depends on it, Quimby joins the good guys, leads Victoria to the imprisoned Albert, and assists her in dispatching Conroy to hell. Whether the descendants of the happily reunited royal couple do, however, turn out to be demons is not recorded.

As attentive readers may by now have guessed, *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* is not a good book. The prose is often as lumbering as the zombies. But it has a certain interest, partly because one of its aims is clearly *to be bad*. Turning Queen Victoria into Buffy is equivalent to drawing a mustache on the Mona Lisa. It is a form of graffiti that draws attention to its own want of art. A large part of the point of this kind of fiction is that its self-conscious flippancy and deliberate shoddiness thumbs its nose at the high pretensions of a more earnest era. As a telling note from Moorat announces: "All anachronisms are intentional, even those that are not."

Moorat particularly relishes entrails: Guts unspool in his novel like reels of old-fashioned film, and human intestines are wolfed down, used to pull victims to their doom, and even to strangle them.

Britons have an odd relationship with history: Precisely because it is so important to us, being the legacy that supports the outsized claims of a small island, it is something we alternately venerate and ridicule. Like a child with overbearing parents, we have to ridicule it because otherwise it would dominate us.

Our love/hate feelings about the Victorians are particularly extreme. In a sense, we do think of them as monsters: sexually repressed, class-bound, hypocritical, ruthlessly expansionist. Yet they are also our great-grandparents, authors of our institutions, architects of reform, and pioneers of the novel, a genre for which we retain enormous affection. In other words, the soppy yet stroppy Queen Victoria may never have leapt onto a moving vehicle or beheaded a werewolf with a pikestaff; but the fact that, in this book, Victoria is half-demon/half-heroine strangely captures a truth about her ambivalent status (and that of her era) in modern Britain.

One might, then, answer the question "Why Victorian zombies?" by arguing that this book performs the same trick as Quimby: It raises the dead, revealing supposedly staid Victorians as creatures of insatiable and primitive appetite, and then has the cathartic pleasure of dismantling them and consigning them to history all over again. But, naturally, this argument involves the kind of academic approach to literature that novels like *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* exist to resist.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith is a different kind of pastiche. It faithfully reproduces much of the text of Jane Austen's best-loved novel, but interlards the familiar episodes, in which verbal blows are traded over tea and cards, with all-new scenes in which Lizzy Bennet and her sisters take on the evil dead with muskets, blades, and throwing stars. As the dust jacket winningly promises: "Complete with romance, heartbreak, swordfights, cannibalism, and thousands of rotting corpses, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* transforms a masterpiece of world literature into something you'd actually want to read."

Once again, a large part of the humor is derived from the inherent naughtiness of taking a text so concerned with propriety and putting the characters into situations so improper for their era. In this book, when Lizzy rejects Darcy's first proposal of marriage, she kicks

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him into the mantelpiece "with such force as to shatter its edge." They then proceed to grapple for the poker. The Bennet sisters, like the feisty heroines of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, have been trained in China and are skilled in swordsmanship, gunfighting, and a variety of Oriental moves and poses that are fatal both to attackers and admirers. When not buying bonnets and attending balls, they are calmly annihilating the herds of zombies who make travel in rural Hertfordshire hazardous.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies is an entertaining read. This is partly because much of it is by Jane Austen, who happens to be a Zen master of wit. But Grahame-Smith's added fight scenes and zombie encounters are also clever. Often, they playfully literalize elements that are already figuratively present in the original. In *Pride and Prejudice*, for example, Charlotte Lucas, a plain and pragmatic friend of Lizzy Bennet, agrees to marry the awful Mr. Collins, a stupid, stout, and self-important Anglican priest. In *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, we learn that Charlotte has agreed to this union only because she has recently been bitten by a zombie and knows that her time is limited.

Once married, she begins to turn into a moronic and lifeless revenant with alarming speed. This is but a more graphic rendering of what Austen's own depiction of a loveless marriage implies. Likewise, Lizzy's conversations with the haughty Lady Catherine de Bourgh, who thinks her beneath Darcy's notice, are already, in Austen, encounters that involve steel-tipped sparring. It is just that, in this version, Lizzy is attacked by Lady Catherine's team of ninjas and executes them blindfolded.

Jane Austen's novels themselves have a strong parodic undertow. Their lack of startling incident thumbs its nose at the Gothic novel, with its brigands, bleeding nuns, sexual outrages, and dastardly villains. The truth of women's lives in early 19th-century England, Austen's fiction humorously affirms, is that they spend much of their time combating rain, boredom, financial pressures, and relatives. It is ironic, then, that 21st-century parodists should put back in the Gothic extremes that Austen deliberately omitted: battles, monsters, melodrama.

Jane Austen, who loved a lampoon, would probably be amused by *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. For the joke is much more on us than on her. The modern world wallows in Austensible nostalgia for a cinematic version of Regency England that bears little relation to her reality. The charm of that England is its restraint: Courtship is gradual and uncertain, there is time for lingering looks and poetry books. Heroines wear layers of pretty cambrics and ribbons; they have little to do but pick roses from idyllic gardens unspoiled by views of pylons and freeways; heroes gallop about on horses and smoulder in tight white breeches. It is the ubiquity of this false nostalgia and winsomely chintzy approach to Austen in a supposedly post-feminist age that makes a gun-toting Lizzy Bennet so appealing.

Since attaching the torso of a Regency romance to the legs and arms of a zombie graphic novel has proved so commercially successful, I think we can look forward to much more Frankenfiction in 2010. Already, a follow-up pastiche, *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*, is doing good business. I imagine we can anticipate ere long the publication of *Wuthering Heights and Werewolves*, *Jude the Obscure and Golems*, and a zombie rewrite of Evelyn Waugh's postwar account of the crumbling aristocracy, *Bride's Head Decapitated*.

If you have an idle hour and a classic novel kicking around, you might even try this game yourself. After all, as Jane Austen didn't say, it is a truth universally acknowledged that a reverent approach to literature has its limitations; whereas a revenant approach leaves you free to do pretty much anything you like. ♦

B&A

How He Did It

The bumpy road to the Reagan White House.

BY PETER HANNAFORD

In his prologue, Craig Shirley puts the reader in the midst of Detroit's Joe Louis Arena, where "Ronald Reagan stood before the multitude of cheering Republicans . . . at long last master of all he surveyed." He looks out at "the thousands of gesticulating, dancing, partying, delirious" convention-goers who are exulting in the moment. From then until the last page, every event of the author's tale of that multi-month campaign, culminating in Reagan's November 1980 victory, has a you-are-there quality. As one who was there for most of it, I can attest to how well Shirley has caught the moments.

Rendezvous with Destiny
Ronald Reagan and the Campaign That Changed America
by Craig Shirley
ISI, 650 pp., $30

Peter Hannaford was a senior communications adviser to Ronald Reagan in the 1980 campaign.

While he does not break new ground with revelations, his intention is to provide the reader with a definitive history of the 1980 campaign, and he succeeds almost too well. Lest your head spin by the details of ever-shifting polls, maneuvers, and news coverage of every step in every primary election campaign—keep going, for the reward will be a clear understanding of how Ronald Reagan's appeal to "Main Street" Americans, including many blue-collar Democrats, coincided with his own determination to win.

The author has an eye for telling detail. He begins with the aftermath

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of the close 1976 loss to Gerald Ford, and recounts that Reagan's newspaper column and daily radio commentaries began again only one month after the 1976 Republican convention. "One of Reagan's early radio segments," he notes, "touted the tax cuts in a bill offered by a young Republican backbencher in Congress, Jack Kemp." Less than two years later, Reagan was campaigning steadily for the Kemp-Roth supply-side tax bill, and less than three years after that, after an intense effort in his first few months as president, he signed the historic tax-cut bill that, once it took full effect, led to an unbroken string of nearly 10 years of economic expansion.

Ronald Reagan's appeal to 'Main Street' Americans, including many blue-collar Democrats, coincided with his own determination to win.

Reagan at Joe Louis Arena, July 17, 1980

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Shirley describes the role in the buildup toward the campaign played by Citizens for the Republic, the ingenious idea of the late Lyn Nofziger to use leftover campaign money to create a multi-candidate political action committee with Reagan as chairman. It could only reimburse Reagan for travel, but travel he did to speak at a series of weekend campaign workshops around the country, whose attendees became the basis of the 1980 campaign's ground army.

To be sure, this is a book for people who love politics, either as participants or observers. And for them, it is a trove of colorful, dramatic tales. The fate of campaign manager John Sears is an example. In the planning of the campaign, Reagan's California circle did not want Sears, the 1976 manager, to repeat his role. They were mindful, however, that political reporters, based in Washington and New York, had much to do with the perception of a candidate's credibility. Sears was popular with the press while a California-based manager would be seen as an outsider. So, Sears became the "first among equals" of the leadership cadre.

As Shirley relates, it was Sears's insistence that Reagan *not* campaign in Iowa, lest he appear no different from the other seven or eight aspiring candidates, that led to his downfall. The media called this "the imperial candidacy." George Bush beat Reagan in the Iowa caucuses, and had what he called "the Big Mo" (for momentum). At that point, Reagan took charge of his own campaign in New Hampshire and (it was later learned) waited for his staff and key supporters to devise a plan to change managers. That plan was unfolded the night following Reagan's famous Nashua debate with Bush, with its memorable line, "I am paying for this microphone, Mr. Green!" The circumstances behind that declaration make for rich reading even 29 years later.

The decision was made to fire Sears and his key aides the afternoon of the New Hampshire primary, before the ballots had been counted. The planning had been done by a small group and kept secret largely because it was done in a series of telephone conference calls. There was no paper trail. As the press corps piled out of their bus at a Manchester hotel in mid-afternoon on Election Day, an aide was there to pass out a press release about Sears's departure and the appointment of William Casey as campaign manager.

Reagan won the New Hampshire primary by 27 points and was never really slowed down after that, although Bush did win some primaries. Shirley walks us through every one of them. The fact that he uses many colorful details—every one of them verified, as I can testify—keeps the recitation moving. The excitement of the Detroit convention—with the rebirth of a party once given up for dead—built some heady optimism going into the general election. But of course, the momentum lessened, for the campaign was not mistake-free, and there were times when Jimmy Carter was clearly ahead. Craig Shirley gives us a lively ride on the electoral roller coaster.

Shirley also gives readers a succinct summing-up of what drove Ronald Reagan, and why he succeeded as president: "Reagan had a clear sense of history," he writes, "and even more important, he had a sense of duty and destiny that propelled him." ♦

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B&A

Junk Medicine

Science is not immune to conspiracy theories.

BY JEFF STIER

Jenny McCarthy and Jim Carey crusade against vaccination, 2008

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It's popular among politicians on both sides of the aisle, as well as the public, to blame corporations, capitalism, and even science itself for our ills. Whether it is obesity (soda), cancer (chemicals), or autism (vaccines), an industrial villain is an easy and satisfying target. Rare is the defense of sound science that holds activists accountable for their scientific misstatements and the consequences of their scare campaigns. The public policy implications of this failure are enormous.

Denialism
How Irrational Thinking Hinders Scientific Progress, Harms the Planet, and Threatens Our Lives
by Michael Specter
Penguin, 304 pp., $27.95

In *Denialism* Michael Specter, science and technology writer for the *New Yorker*, goes after low-hanging fruit in chapters as entertainingly titled as "Vaccines and the Great Denial," "The Organic Fetish," and "The Era of Echinacea." That's good, as far as it goes. He fails, however, to take on equally groundless but more sacrosanct examples of junk science. For instance, Specter writes that the alternative medicine guru Dr. Andrew Weil "offers sound advice in his many books—calling . . . corn sweeteners and trans fats dangerous." These products, like their "natural" alternatives, sugar and saturated fat, are not particularly dangerous at moderate levels, and Specter's readers deserve to know that, as surely as they deserve to know that anti-vaccine conspiracy theories are false.

Instead of following popular wisdom about trans fats, for instance, he'd have done a greater service by identifying the crusade against them as another example of, as he puts it elsewhere, "the 'precautionary principle,' which holds that potential risks, no matter how remote, must be given more weight than any possible benefit, no matter how great." At a time when activists claim misleadingly that "there is no safe level" of lead, or that the plastic additives bisphenol-A and phthalates are the most dangerous chemicals known to man, Specter doesn't quite finish the job. But he does deserve credit for his broader message about how those who reject mainstream science (which is a more refined thing than mere conventional wisdom) have the power to distort public policy and undermine public health.

In his vaccine chapter, Specter holds anti-vaccine groups such as the National Vaccine Information Center accountable. The "denialists" have fomented an "epidemic of doubt," which has demonstrably caused an increase in preventable illnesses by scaring people away from using potentially lifesaving, safe vaccines. Falling for unscientific claims is one thing when it hurts only you—go ahead, for instance, and waste your money on organic foods (which Specter reminds us are no safer or healthier than conventional produce)—but when junk science hurts the rest of us, it is time to call a quack a quack. When parents fail to vaccinate their children, they endanger your children, too, because their children undermine our ability to develop "herd immunity," which provides a layer of protection for all.

Specter also gets it right when he points out what happens when industry and the government fail to stand up to junk science. One of the many unfounded claims from denialists is that a vaccine preservative, thimerosal, is harmful, especially to children. The preservative, which contains a very low level of mercury, has been well studied, and no credible evidence exists to indicate that it is harmful in any way. Yet in the summer of 1999 the federal government ordered it removed from vaccines as a "precaution." Specter rightly chides vaccine-makers who, "under fierce public pressure," went along with the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics in saying that "the current levels of thimerosal

Jeff Stier is the associate director of the American Council on Science and Health.

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will not hurt children, but reducing those levels will make safe vaccines even safer." Placating denialists seems to be the path of least resistance. It is also a path to more problems.

Today we are feeling the consequences of such woeful governance. Consider the recent shortage of novel H1N1 (swine flu) vaccine. A variety of factors are to blame for the widespread shortage of the vaccine, but one reason is the federal government's failure to permit the use of vaccine-boosting additives called adjuvants. Adjuvants are particularly useful at times like these, when there is a rush to make enough vaccine in the face of a novel strain of virus. The use of adjuvants could have quadrupled the number of doses available and would have undoubtedly helped tamp down the worldwide spread of H1N1. But activists who oppose additives (and, usually, vaccines themselves) as a form of contamination were ready to pounce, and what happened next resembled a small child cowering before a big needle. Except the infant was your government.

At a November hearing before the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, senators wanted to know why the Department of Health and Human Services opted not to use adjuvants despite their strong safety record and obvious need. Dr. Nicole Lurie, chief of preparedness and response for HHS, said one reason they hadn't approved adjuvant use was the concern of anti-vaccine activists: "We didn't really want to rock the public confidence in a new vaccine with adjuvant," she testified.

This approach supports Specter's boldest claim: "Caution is simply a different kind of risk, one that is even more likely to kill people." Such lack of leadership in the face of unscientific fears will lead to a race to the bottom in the formulation of public health policy: Science and standards are put aside in favor of expediency, and industry and government continue to lower the bar and give in to agenda-driven activists. The science of fear is being used to create a fear of science, and as Specter writes, "Fear is more infectious than any virus." ♦

B&A

Wars of Ideas

Hearts, minds, and the continuation of diplomacy by other means. **BY MARTHA BAYLES**

EVERETT COLLECTION

Marlon Brando in 'The Ugly American' (1965)

The State Department defines public diplomacy as "engaging, informing, and influencing key international audiences." Because this can be done by governments or by private actors, the chief virtue of this book, edited by Philip Seib, director of the Center on Public Diplomacy at the University of Southern California, is its generous scope. Along with U.S. international broadcasting, military strategic communication, and cultural diplomacy, it also contains chapters on outsourcing; the new social media (Web 2.0); the views from Russia, China, and Egypt; and the role of religion.

Toward a New Public Diplomacy
Redirecting U.S. Foreign Policy
edited by Philip Seib
Palgrave Macmillan, 272 pp., $30

As hinted in the subtitle, public diplomacy does not consist wholly of persuading or pressuring foreigners to go along with U.S. policy in the short term. Some forms of public diplomacy work better in the long term and at arm's length from policy, especially when that policy is unpopular. At the same time, it borders on wishful thinking to suggest that public diplomats will ever be able to "redirect" foreign policy. The longer they live overseas, the better they get at their jobs. But in most cases, this also means the less clout they have in Washington.

In the opening chapters, William Rugh, former ambassador to Yemen and the United Arab Emirates, wrestles with Joseph Nye's useful but cloudy concept of "soft power"; and

Martha Bayles, who teaches in the honors program at Boston College, is the author of the forthcoming America's Cultural Footprint: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly *(Yale).*

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Nicholas Cull, author of the definitive history of the U.S. Information Agency, crams a century of bureaucratic churning into 26 pages. Because most Americans are barely aware of how public diplomacy works, such an introduction may be necessary. But there's no getting around the eye-glazing nature of this material.

Since 9/11 the U.S. government has spent more than $600 million on a satellite TV service (Al Hurra) and an FM radio channel (Radio Sawa) aimed at Arab audiences. It has also lavished untold billions on military *strategic communications*, a term that overlaps with civilian public diplomacy but also refers to deceptive practices used in war. Both subjects are hard to get one's mind around, but *Toward a New Public Diplomacy* does a fair job with the first.

In their chapter on Al Hurra, Shawn Powers and Ahmed El Gody recite the litany of criticisms leveled at the service since it was launched in 2004: Shoddy production; corrupt management; ethnic and religious bias; failure to compete in the crowded Arab market; excessive reliance on AP, Reuters, and the other wire services; and the occasional gross error of editorial judgment, such as "extensive and deferential coverage" of a Holocaust deniers' conference in Iran.

Another contributor, Amelia Arsenault, cogently analyzes the promise —and pitfalls—of the new social media. To her credit, Arsenault questions the current cliché that these media are automatically on the side of freedom and democracy. As she notes, Web 2.0 has the potential of "engaging and/or alienating foreign constituencies" and can be used to "disseminate information and/or disinformation." Yet what's missing from these chapters, and from the discussion of news media in Neal Rosendorf's chapter on cultural diplomacy, is a proper assessment of the older, more established components of international broadcasting: the Voice of America and the "surrogate" services, such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and (more recently) Radio Free Asia, whose mission is to provide local, regional, and world news to populations in unfree and partly free media environments.

Hillary Clinton in South Africa, 2009

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Despite the occasional lapse, most of these services have adapted quite well to the post-Cold War world, shifting to new regions and adopting new media platforms. For example, the Persian-language services of VOA and RFE/RL now attract a significant enough following in Iran that the government labors to jam their signals and block their websites. In a similar vein RFA has been winning industry awards for its on-the-ground reporting from restricted areas in China, Burma, and Vietnam.

The real story, untold in this volume, is that the Broadcasting Board of Governors has starved VOA and the surrogates to fatten Al Hurra and Radio Sawa—which plays Arab and Western pop music interspersed with news segments also taken from the wire services. In contrast, VOA and the better surrogates employ local journalists who risk and sometimes lose their lives to get on-the-ground stories. To call these efforts "propaganda" (Rosendorf), or assert flatly that they "do not work any more" (Powers/El Gody), is to do them a disservice.

It is also, ironically, to echo the Chinese view. According to Guolin Shen of Fudan University, VOA's twin priorities of reporting the news and representing the U.S. government create a "contradiction" that necessarily destroys credibility. This is ironic, coming from a professor of journalism in a country whose own news media are systematically censored. As Shen notes, VOA was the main source of information during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, and Beijing still labors to suppress both it and RFA.

The priorities of international broadcasting are more complex than those of the commercial news media. But then so is its mission. News organizations such as CNN send correspondents to remote hot spots but otherwise make no effort to cover local and regional events in nonaffluent, nonprofitable parts of the world. U.S. international broadcasters have much to learn from the commercial media, especially in the realm of audience research. But while the commercial media ask, "What do they want to hear?" American broadcasters must ask, "Given what is going on in their country, what do they need to hear?"

Now let us follow the real money. By one estimate, the current budget for military strategic communication is 20 times larger than that for all aspects of civilian public diplomacy. To be sure, this includes combat-related information operations as well as the Pentagon's massive public affairs apparatus. But the Defense Department is also heavily involved in "telling America's story" (the old USIA slogan) to foreign populations.

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To the soldiers involved, this duty is a matter of necessity, not choice. When America was attacked on 9/11, civilian public diplomacy was in disarray, and to decision-makers both inside and outside the Bush administration, it seemed more efficient to have the military pinch-hit than to revive instruments of public diplomacy that had lain fallow for a decade. The trouble is, this short-term solution became a long-term trend best described by military analyst Matt Armstrong: "American public diplomacy wears combat boots."

Robert Gates and Hillary Clinton have both called for a reversal of this trend. And early last year Congress threatened to reduce appropriations for strategic communication (without, of course, increasing them for public diplomacy). But little has changed, and as the military ramps up for a new surge in Afghanistan, its ability to fight the "battle of ideas" is in urgent need of objective scrutiny.

Unfortunately, the chapter by Abiodun Williams contains no such scrutiny. To the key question of whether the military *should* conduct public diplomacy, Williams's reply is to restate the obvious: The Pentagon has been given the resources to do so, and soldiers are already the dominant face of America throughout the world. To the related question of whether the military *can* conduct public diplomacy, he offers two examples—"the Berlin airlift during the Cold War and Operation Unified Assistance following the 2004 tsumani"—that, while admirable, can scarcely be seen as typical examples of public diplomacy.

Further, Williams strains credulity by suggesting that the State Department is really in charge of strategic communication. At one point he declares that "the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs"—the office occupied by Karen Hughes and James Glassman during the Bush administration—actually "leads the U.S. public diplomacy effort." This is simply not the case. That office, currently occupied by former Discovery Channel president and CEO Judith McHale, is at best a bully pulpit, with a minuscule staff and no budgetary or programmatic authority within State, never mind Defense.

For the rest, Williams does little more than recite current military doctrine, complete with frequent repetition of the word *must*, as in "*must* listen carefully," "*must* . . . confront . . . misperceptions and fears," "*must* leverage the power of personal relationships," "*must* adapt to the local information environments." Such wish-laden boilerplate brings to mind the wry comment of one foreign service officer well versed in the latest counterinsurgency doctrine: "If the only way to defeat violent extremism is to help every at-risk society become free, prosperous, and well governed, then there's not enough money on God's green earth, not to mention wisdom and judgment, to do that."

By one estimate, the current budget for military strategic communication is 20 times larger than that for all aspects of civilian public diplomacy.

On culture, two key issues are raised by Ambassador Rugh: that America's literature, art, and performing arts are less well known today than ever; and that our popular culture, while ubiquitous and obviously alluring to youth, has at best a mixed impact. Based on his experience in Arab countries, Rugh writes that "some" perceive America "as a decadent, self-indulgent, and uncontrolled society" and "do not admire or respect what they see in our films or hear in our music, but regard it as a negative influence."

This same question arises in Neal Rosendorf's chapter on cultural diplomacy. But his answer is disappointing. Expressing his own "faith that on balance, now as in the past, America's popular culture is a reflection of something powerfully positive about the United States," he concludes on a cavalier note: "Ultimately, America has to reconcile itself to the perceived (and actual) good and bad of its culture via The Popeye principle: "'I Yam What I Yam.'" *I Yam What I Yam?* Isn't this what the last administration stood accused of in the realm of foreign policy?

Finally, Jennifer Marshall and Thomas Farr argue that of all the messages America could be sharing with the world, the most timely and valuable include our experience "reconciling the dual authorities of state and religion," our "insight about how religiously grounded norms might legitimately influence public policy," and our "robust vision of religious liberty as the foundation of democratic order." Marshall/Farr point out that the task of conveying this message is encumbered by three obstacles: the antireligious bias of the educated classes; the harsh treatment of religion in popular culture, especially youth culture; and the tendency in many parts of world, including the United States, to confuse the American constitutional ban on the establishment of religion (which was designed to encourage its flourishing) with the antireligious bias of French-style secularism (*laïcité*).

Apart from educating foreign service officers to better understand other faiths and the place of religion in American life and politics, Marshall and Farr make few practical suggestions. Instead, they offer a cogent and readable account of what the message should be—thereby making their chapter an interesting bookend with Arsenault's on social media, which says very little about message.

It might seem a simple matter to put these pieces together and, say, use social media to foster a global conversation about the many benefits of religious freedom. But to do this right would require a deeper reservoir of regional expertise, knowledge of America's founding principles, and plain old resources than can currently be summoned by any of the players in public diplomacy. ♦

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B&A

Israel's Secret

The 'informal . . . improvisational' approach to business innovation. **BY DOUGLAS J. FEITH**

Israel's birth, survival, and prosperity contradicted some stereotypes and confirmed others. Early in the last century, as British officials debated whether to support Zionist aspirations for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, a principal argument against such support was that Europe's Jews, the potential immigrants, were largely soft city people who would starve in so poor, rural, and uncongenial a land. Lord Curzon sniffed that the Jews were not "a people inured to agriculture."

Start-Up Nation
The Story of Israel's Economic Miracle
by Dan Senor and Saul Singer
Twelve, 320 pp., $26.99

Moreover, it was widely believed that the Jews were incapable of military skill or physical courage. Even in the late 1940s, leading officials in Palestine's mandatory government assumed that the Arabs would crush the incipient Jewish state. An American diplomat reported from Jerusalem that the British police "have no sympathy for the Jews, and state freely their opinion that the latter will 'collect a packet' from the Arabs once the British relinquish the mandate."

Unpromising as the Jews may have looked at the time, they quickly became world-class farmers and world-class fighters in their reconstituted homeland. Later on—especially in the last 20 years or so—Israel has become a world center for high-tech innovation and entrepreneurship. In 2008, Israel attracted two-and-a-half times as much venture capital per capita as the United States, and greater than 30 times more than Europe. Next to the United States, Israel has more NASDAQ-listed companies than any other country in the world, and remarkably, defense, counterterrorism, and homeland security companies account for less than five percent of Israel's gross domestic product.

Perhaps this is unsurprising, given the Jews' longstanding reputation as high-achievers in science and business. But Israel is a speck of a country with a population of 7.3 million. How it established such a large role for itself in international business—despite the Arab economic boycott, terrorism, and multiple wars—is quite a tale. Dan Senor, a businessman and former aide to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad, and Saul Singer, an editorial writer for the *Jerusalem Post*, tell that tale here. Their writing is lively and geared to a general audience: It will certainly appeal to people who have enjoyed *Freakonomics* and the books of Malcolm Gladwell.

Start-Up Nation reviews the achievements of a diverse set of Israeli high-tech engineers and start-up businessmen. One is a young man who drew on his experience as a terrorist hunter in the Israeli military to found a small firm called Fraud Sciences, which invented ways to counteract identity theft and payment fraud on the Internet. He pitched his processes to PayPal, the world's second largest Internet payment company. PayPal gave him 100,000 transactions to analyze—transactions that PayPal, using more complete data than they shared with the Israelis, had already processed. PayPal assumed that it would take months to complete the analysis but the Israelis finished in three days and their results were 17 percent better than PayPal's. Two years ago PayPal announced that it was buying the Israeli start-up for $169 million.

Israeli engineers—contrarian, pushy, brilliant—have been instrumental in developing personal computing and the Internet. Israelis in Haifa produced Intel's greatest early success: the 8088 chip, around which IBM engineered the very first PC. Six years later, in 1986, Israelis in Jerusalem made the 386 chip, seven times faster than the 8088.

If computers were to become smaller and more versatile, chips had to become faster and faster. But faster chips required more power and produced more heat. This required cooling and precluded miniaturization. If this problem were not solved, computers could not evolve into laptops, let alone sophisticated cell phones. It was engineers at Intel Israel who created an entirely new chip design that would run software faster without requiring more power. But this stunning technological coup won only half the battle. Industry financiers still had to be persuaded to stop evaluating chips by their "clock speed"—the metric the Israelis had just abandoned—and focus on the ability to run software. Intel Israel convinced not only the company's American headquarters but Wall Street generally to assess the new design by new standards. The result was the Centrino chip. Israeli technology then became instrumental in Intel's Core Duo chips and in dozens of new Intel processors.

In the mid-70s, Intel's initial investment in Israel was $300,000 and the company employed five people there full-time. Yet eventually, Senor and Singer write, Israel was "responsible . . . for the first Pentium chips, and the new architecture that analysts agree saved Intel from a downward spiral during the 1990s." Intel Israel is now Israel's largest private-sector employer. It exports $1.53 billion annually and its production has never been interrupted, not even by war.

Other stories highlight the Israeli innovations that made possible Google Suggest, the list of suggestions that appear instantly in menu form as you type a search request; the PillCam, a

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miniature camera embedded in a pill so that 18 photos per second can be wirelessly and painlessly transmitted from gastrointestinal tracts; ICQ, the original instant messaging program for Windows users (which "became the most downloaded program in the history of CNET.com, with 230 million downloads"), and Cisco's CRS-1 router, which can process 92 *trillion* bits per second:

> CRS-1 has the capacity to download the entire printed collection of the U.S. Library of Congress in 4.6 seconds. Doing this with a dial-up modem would take about 82 years.

Senor and Singer suggest various explanations for Israel's superpower status in the world of technology start-ups. They argue that Israel's informal, anti-hierarchical, improvisational, risk-taking, self-critical military culture helps produce its similar business culture. Because Israel is too small to maintain a large standing army or a large body of senior officers, it relies heavily on reserves, and its ratio of senior officers to combat troops is one to nine. (In the U.S. Army it is one to five.) "Fewer senior officials means more individual initiative at the lower ranks," Senor and Singer observe, emphasizing that compulsory military service gives many young Israelis weighty responsibilities and invaluable leadership training.

Israeli irreverence and skepticism are valuable in business. Senor and Singer quote an Israeli who explains that "from the age of zero we are educated to challenge the obvious, ask questions, debate everything, innovate." There is value in the strong sense of national purpose common among Israelis, who are aware that they do good for their country when they do well for themselves in business. Senor and Singer write that Israel benefits from its "profitable patriots" who appreciate "survival through success." Also, as a result of immigration, Israel has more engineers and scientists per capita than any other country. "A nation of immigrants is a nation of entrepreneurs," they are told.

One quibble: *Start-Up Nation* is unpersuasive in its praise of the government's central planning efforts, especially in Israel's early years when David Ben-Gurion was prime minister Senor and Singer make the debatable assertion that it is a "myth" that Ben-Gurion was a socialist; but there are economists—Daniel Doron, for one—who have argued more compellingly that Israel's early economic successes came despite, not because of, the government's decidedly socialist economic policies.

Though its agricultural, military, and high-tech achievements have been impressive, Israel still faces serious threats to its existence, not least from Iran's nuclear program. Vulnerability to destruction is often a trait of countries either fledgling or in decline: Israel is neither. It is, arguably, in its prime; but it remains vulnerable, as it has always been. A key point of *Start-Up Nation* is that the traits that have allowed Israel to survive militarily have also helped it to thrive economically. The Jewish state will need all those traits, and then some, to continue to survive. ♦

B&A

Homage to Patagonia

High adventure at the bottom of the world.

BY DAVID GUASPARI

Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego

The passenger windows frame nothing but Patagonian steppe—no roads, farms, domesticated animals—but the plane descends relentlessly and, at the last moment, El Calafate's runway appears beneath its wheels. This tarmac was laid 10 years ago to service the growth in Adventure Travel, a passion of Baby Boomers refusing to go gently (or any other way) into the good night and hastening to remote destinations that new infrastructure makes not too daunting—e.g., after the locals have heard of vegetarians.

Our group is demographically mixed. There are three tough nuts in their seventies: Dan, a field geologist and recent age-group medalist at the Nordic World Ski Championships; and Bob and Dave, scoutmasters before the Boy Scouts switched from hiking and camping and hunting to computer programming, recycling, and AIDS awareness-raising. Bob used to march his charges 700 miles per year, and if they or their parents complained, he told them to find something else to do. Dave, retired from teaching elementary school, is a minimalist: While the rest of us were wrapped head to toe in high-tech climate-control synthetics, he seemed to have been outfitted at Sears Father's Day sales. If this were a movie, Dave would be the quiet, unassuming guy with 12 bodies buried in the back garden and some filets in the freezer.

The remainder consists of Dana, a thirtysomething radiologist, and five authentic Boomers: Rick, who leads trips like this throughout the world (Nepal, Mongolia, Bhutan); Rebecca and Terry, a married couple who compete regularly in triathlons; and me and my significant other, Anne. Last year, she and I and Terry and Rebecca Adventure Traveled with Rick to the top of Mount Kilimanjaro. That had a natural story line, but this trip is more of a highlight reel: treks in two national parks and a journey to Ushuaia, southernmost city in the world (with the southernmost golf course, a nine-holer).

All the campsites are cushy: A trekking company has packed in food and tents, by llama when necessary, and supplied an employee to cook. Our first four days are spent in Argentina's Parque Nacional los Glaciares and dominated by the sight, in fluctuating light and clouds, of the Fitzroy Massif and Cerro Torre—8,000-foot granite walls that offer some of the most technically

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demanding and dangerous climbing in the world. Cerro Torre, a delicate, scary spire, plays the Chrysler Building to the Fitzroy's Empire State, a jagged tusk. Though the summits are only 11,000 feet, and we're mostly below 3,000, the glaciers and immense rock faces give the scene a big mountain look.

There was no guarantee they would be visible—Patagonian weather is "changeable"—yet the mountains were almost always out. Snows lingering through a late spring blocked one of our routes; and rain and high winds nixed a plan to strap on crampons and noodle around low-angle ice at the bottom of Glacier Grande. But the pyrotechnic blooms of fire bush are ubiquitous, small orchids have begun to appear, and we walk through a geologist's dream—or an eighth-grader's nightmare, a tangible display of vocabulary (moraines, glacial striations, intrusions, folds) that Earth Science class struggles to pound into adolescent heads. Dan—endorphins kicking in?—releases Too Much Information: He's going commando.

We pause above cascades that plunge into a glacial river. I remove boots, dislodge one, and watch in horror as it tumbles toward the cliff's edge—then catches on a shrub just before launching into space.

"When I saw that boot go sailing past," Anne says, "I just knew it had to be yours. *So typical*."

We leave the park and take a boat to watch the Perito Moreno glacier calve huge blocks of ice into the lake at its foot. The face is three miles across and reaches more than 200 feet above us, its scale difficult to grasp from photos that don't show the boat. The ice looks tormented—wracked and split like some sinner in hell—and I recall that the innermost circle of Dante's *Inferno* is frozen.

The drive to Torres del Paine requires prolonged paperwork on leaving Argentina and, just down the road, entering Chile. Our guide Facundo and the bus driver pass a mate (pronounced "mah-tay") gourd back and forth, sharing its straw. The ritual: Fill the gourd with leaves from your five-pound bag; recharge with hot water until the leaves are spent; scrape out used leaves; repeat, for miles on end.

"Hey, Facundo," I say, channeling my mother, "how often do you run that baby through the dishwasher?"

Mountain guides, park rangers, credentialed photographers at viewpoints—all have great hair, cool shades, sharp uniforms. They are, Anne says, "gorgeous"—Ché without the murderous sociopath business—whereas the male norm in our group is nerd. Nerds lengthily discuss timber and mining potentialities; optimal siting of electrical generating equipment; durability and maintainability of various road surfaces; water seepage through moraine and earth dams.

Torres Del Paine

ANNE KENNEY

The Cuernos del Paine overlook our first camp in Chile, a stunning sculptural group of mountains that's like an assemblage of colossal chessmen. We plan on the "W" route up and back three valleys to (weather permitting) spectacular views of mountains and the Patagonian ice cap. One leg ascends a steep moraine to the base of the Towers of Paine (pronounced "PAH-ee-nay," though "Towers of Pain" doesn't seem inappropriate), thousand-meter blades of vertical granite. The central tower was not climbed until 1963. We've packed in bottles of Argentinean wine and hold a cocktail hour beside the tents, Dana pouring the malbec into our canteens.

It takes 500 miles, not all of them paved, and another double border-crossing to reach Ushuaia. We see condor (10-foot wing span), caracara (a mere four feet), rhea (New World ostrich), ibis, flamingo, and guanaco (related to llamas but, we're told, good for nothing). Signs warn of land mines—the Argentina/Chile border has been fraught—but we see no direct evidence, such as exploding guanaco, of their presence. The proprietress of a roadhouse shows us her pet condor; blind in one eye, it bobs and weaves to take us in, ignoring the cat tearing strips off its dinner, a sheep's head past its prime. Heaps of bottled water are shrines to an unofficial local saint, Deolinda Correa. She died of thirst in the desert, the story goes, but her infant son was found alive, days later, miraculously nursing at her breast.

After the hypnotic hours of semi-desert, a pageant of magical names and half-remembered history unfolds: Straits of Magellan, Tierra del Fuego (passing from steppe to wetter, greener mountains), the Garibaldi Pass, the Beagle Channel—where Ushuaia, ringed by snowy mountains, sits on a bay—and over the horizon, beyond the island cluster that defines Cape Horn, the Drake Passage.

For a few hours we cruise the Beagle Channel. The water, surprisingly, is calm, the sky sunny, and Mount Darwin, normally hidden by clouds, in full view. A camera pulling back would disclose our small knot of tourists standing on a hill, that sits on an island, that lies in a channel, that has a different ocean at each end—and would stop, having reached an unobstructed view of the end of the world. ♦

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B&A

Citizen Welles

A film about a play and its prodigious producer.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The backstage drama is one of the unheralded movie genres, and one of the most durable. The first sound picture to win an Oscar, *Broadway Melody* of 1929, was about the making of a show. *42nd Street*, probably the most famous film of the early talkie period, is (despite its reputation) a gritty adult drama about the hardscrabble lives of theater folk during the Depression. The most entertaining American movie of the postwar years is *All About Eve*, the backstage drama to end all backstage dramas. And on we go into the present, with *Shakespeare in Love* offering a fanciful recounting of the creation of *Romeo and Juliet*, Mike Leigh's amazing *Topsy-Turvy* and its extraordinarily detailed depiction of the making of *The Mikado*, and even small children being introduced to the Machiavellian machinations of the evil diva-ette Sharpay in the three *High School Musical* films.

So, the story of the making of a theatrical production—any theatrical production—is, wonder of wonders, one of the most cinematic of events. What makes the form so compelling? People behaving badly, people behaving nobly, money on the line, fame and fortune in the offing, and a time limit—the pulse-pounding climax when the show must open whether the characters are ready or not. The interesting part about these backstage dramas is that, no matter how melodramatic they get, they only approximate the true level of tension, rivalry, hostility, and excitement of a theater work in the throes of birth. The Broadway wag Larry Gelbart once famously said that "if Hitler's alive, I hope he's out of town with a musical." But that can be said of nearly any show, including a grammar school production.

Me and Orson Welles
Directed by Richard Linklater

Christian McKay

FREESTYLE RELEASING

The backstage drama is such a vivid form that its vitality happily infects even the wan direction, indifferent writing, and problematic conception of a modest and pretty new film called *Me and Orson Welles*. Richard Linklater's movie, based on a novel for young adults that I can't imagine any young adult of the current generation has ever actually read, is about a 17-year-old suburban boy crazy for the arts who skips school one day in 1937 and comes into New York City. In an hour's time young Richard finds himself hired to play the lute and perform in a production of *Julius Caesar*—simply called *Caesar*—that is due to open in a week. The venue is a new theater called the Mercury. The director and star is Orson Welles. And everything goes wrong until, finally, everything goes wonderfully right.

The Welles *Caesar* was, in fact, a groundbreaking production, one of the first Shakespeare plays to be done in modern dress and perhaps the first to envision the parallels between Shakespeare's fear of the mob and the rise of fascism. *Me and Orson Welles* marks the second time in a decade someone has seen fit to make a film about the pre-*Citizen Kane* director and his news-making, disaster-courting production of a Broadway show. The first was Tim Robbins's awful *Cradle Will Rock* (1999), in which Welles is portrayed, bizarrely and stupidly, as a fey twit.

Me and Orson Welles features a much more credible, much more haunting Welles in the person of a British actor named Christian McKay, who not only looks like Welles, but captures a gloriously mad gleam in his eyes and the overwhelming personal magnetism that captivated and dominated people for decades.

The problem with McKay's performance, and with the movie as a whole, is that it fails to capture the truly astounding fact about Welles in 1937, which is this: He was all of 22 years old, only a few years older than the high school "me" of the movie's title. He was a very great genius, perhaps the most prodigious artistic talent America ever produced. He did things on stage, on radio, and with a movie camera no one had ever done before, and all before he was 25. And then he mostly ran dry.

McKay, 35 when the movie was made, already looks somewhat dissipated. When he refers to our boy protagonist as "Junior," he really does seem to be a much older man tutoring a protégé. And when he is angered by Junior's rivalry for the attentions of a cute stagehand, he seems like a vaguely creepy seducer a decade older than she when any such relationship would actually have occurred between Welles and a woman who was his senior.

That would have been a much more interesting movie, a movie about a kid in love with the arts and his relationship with the slightly older kid who has been touched by the Muses but is still a kid. As it is, *Me and Orson Welles* is just a conventional tale of a theatrical megalomaniac and a wide-eyed innocent.

Even so, it's captivating. Because it's a backstage drama, and when the curtain rises, your heart pounds. Just as though you're backstage. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"Obama's appearance, which lasted more than an hour, came in an unusual setting for the start-of-the-year retreat: the Capitol. Seeking to portray themselves as hard at work rather than relaxing as millions of Americans remain unemployed, Democrats eschewed their usual three-day trip to Kingsmill Resort and Spa in Williamsburg in favor of an auditorium at the visitor center."

—*Washington Post*, January 15, 2010

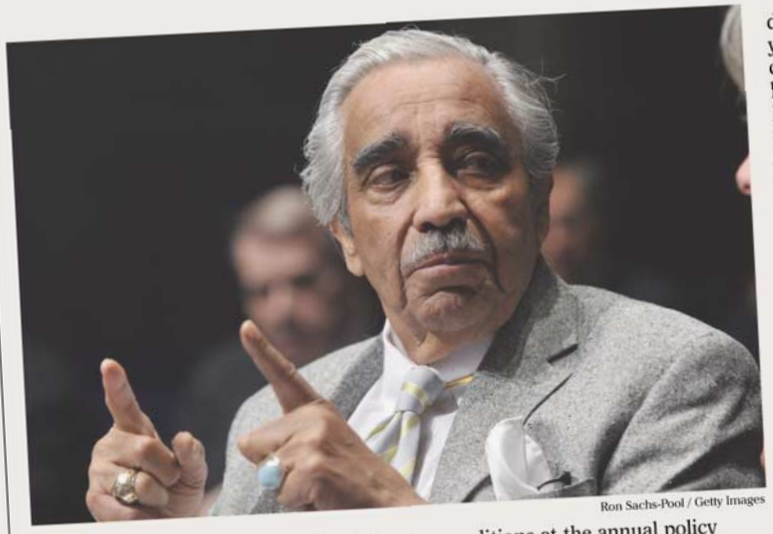
York Times

FOR YOU, ONE DOLLAR

NUARY 18, 2010

DEMOCRATS DESCRIBE ANNUAL RETREAT AS 'WORST EVER'

Complaints Include Lack of Room Service, Showers



Ron Sachs-Pool / Getty Images

Rep. Charles Rangel was irate about sleeping conditions at the annual policy retreat. "My head was only inches away from John Dingell's foot!" exclaimed the New York Democrat.

By CARL HULSE

House Democrats expressed anger, frustration, and disgust after leaving this year's policy retreat at the U.S. Capitol Visitor Center, though it had little to do with the actual agenda. Rather, members were outraged by the choice of venue, seen as a step down from last year's confab at a Virginia spa. Based on comment cards secretly obtained by The New York Times, the attendees described "terrible sleeping conditions" on "cold stone floors," the lack of shower facilities, and a cafeteria that closes early on weekends. Most ranked the retreat as the "worst ever."

"I haven't slept inside a sleeping bag since I was in the Army," said New York representative Charles Rangel, who offered to host next year's retreat at his Caribbean villa. Another member of the New York delegation, Rep. Jerrold Nadler, complained that the dining options were sparse. "Either you brown-bag it, wait in line at the cafeteria with a mob of tourists, or load up on snacks from the gift shop." Mr. Nadler admitted to doing all of the above. Meanwhile, Patrick Kennedy of Rhode Island was disappointed at how poorly the visitor center compares with the Kingsmill Resort and Spa. "I was very much looking forward to a deep-tissue massage—the kind I would get at Kingsmill. Instead I had to convince Henry Waxman to walk on my back."

Many Democrats were outraged upon learning some of their caucus leaders enjoyed better accommodations. While most of the attendees slept in the main auditorium and next to escalators, caucus chairman John Larson had his very own coat check closet. A fight nearly broke out when it was revealed that majority leader Steny Hoyer had known of a vending machine but kept it a secret.

President Obama tried to assuage the members, reminding them that they are living in leaner times. He also asked them to hold firm on health care reform and promised to support each of them in their bids for reelection. The attendees were not satisfied, however, until the president treated everyone to donuts—clearly noted in the comment cards as the high-point of the conference. Mr. Obama also supplied the coffee, which was served by former President Bill

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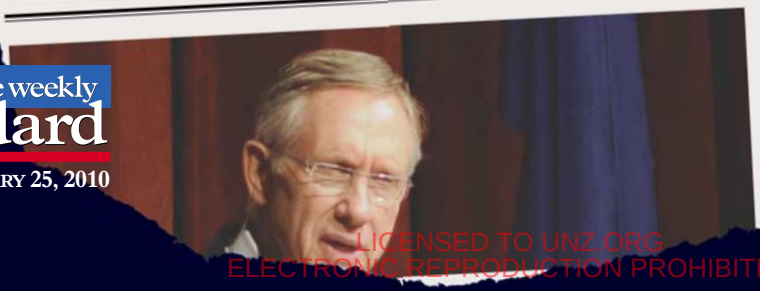

Reid Sorry For Calling Pelosi 'Worse Than Snooki'

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